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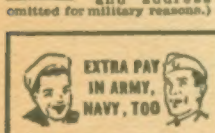

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Adventure
(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 110, No. 1 for November, 1943 Best of New Stories

NOVELETTES

One Little Slip . . . . . H. S. M. KEMP 38

In which Corporal Joe Ryan, R. C. M. P., drives a dog sled down the frozen reaches of the Muskeg River to count corpses by the light of the aurora borealis and add a killer to the sum as he jots down the total.

Red Justice (a Captain Carter story) . . . . . WILLIAM DU BOIS 62

It was anything but a pleasant duty to which Carter and Sergeant Grady had been assigned—overseeing the wholesale removal of a nation to an alien land—and it wasn't made any easier when fratricide reared its bloody head among their Seminole charges as they evacuated them from the fever-ridden glades of the Floridas.

SHORT STORIES

Collision Hazard . . . . . L. L. FOREMAN 30

Detridge was not the kind of man you'd expect to find aboard the *Cathar*. He'd come to the Navy from the palatial cruising liner, *Golden Star*, and working tugs were a bit beneath him, he felt. But that didn't excuse his insulting his new captain by calling the craft a 'dirty old bucket' and using her for a battering ram.

Gray as in Apple . . . . . CHRISTIAN FOLKARD 56

The Japanese colonel came out of the clearing, the flag of the rising sun draped over his arm, to surrender his forces to the Aussie commander. That was when Chips Raffles put his rifle to his shoulder and shot him in the belly. A complete violation of military etiquette, of course, but then, as Chips explained later, the flag looked gray instead of red and somehow he just couldn't help it.

IF YOUR COPY OF THIS MAGAZINE IS LATE—

We regret that, due to the difficulties of wartime transportation, your *Adventure* may sometimes be a little late in reaching you. If this should happen, your patience will be appreciated. Please do not write complaining of the delay. It occurs after the magazine leaves our offices and is caused by conditions beyond our control.

—The Publishers.

BE OUT ON NOVEMBER 10TH ◆ ◆ ◆

Message to Mandakas . . . . . HAL G. EVARTS 81

When Corporal Kondylis paddled ashore on that Cretan beach, all he wanted was to make the best of a bad job and get back home to Chicago. It took him three days to find the ghost to whom his message was addressed and the night he had to leave the island he knew he wanted to return more than he ever wanted to see 'The Loop' again.

Break-Through . . . . . ROBERT E. MAHAFFAY 150

"Three days and nights of it," the private said. "Hammering those sons with everything we had. No harm in saying those guys can really fight, is there, Sarge?" The sergeant shrugged. "They been at it a long time," he said. "The ones that are left—"

THE FACT STORY

A Few Tons of Plywood . . . . . HUGH B. CAVE 90

PT Squadron "X" had its baptism of fire the night its four boats took on a Jap force of one battleship, three cruisers and eight destroyers. "Everybody ducked," Lieutenant Commander Montgomery reported, "when those capital ships opened up on us. We got a good laugh out of it later, for PT boats are made of ⅜-inch plywood that wouldn't stop a good-sized hailstone, and there's nothing to duck behind."

SERIALS

Sharper Than the Sword (1st part of 2) . . . . GEORGES SURDEZ 10

Captain Barret parachuted sixteen thousand feet from his morning patrol straight into the path of the Nazi blitz to learn from Agnedel, master of the strangest household in France, that there is something most men fear more than a gun, a naked blade or poison.

The Fleet in the Forest (conclusion) . . . . . CARL D. LANE 102

There they rode, those perfect ships of Britain's Royal Navy, gleaming with paint, each bit of rigging taut and tarred, manned by the smartest crews afloat. And there rode Perry's ships—makeshift, frontier-built hulks manned by farmers, trappers, merchants. "General quarters!" blew the clarion bugles and the battle began—the battle that was to forge Chid Alwyn's life even as it forged the Nation's and bring them both to man's estate.

DEPARTMENTS

The Camp-Fire . . . . . Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 6
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Ask Adventure Experts . . . . . The men who furnish it 155
Lost Trails . . . . . Where old paths cross 159
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Cover painted for Adventure by Maurice Bower
Kenneth S. White, Editor

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THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

TWO recruits to the Writers' Brigade this month and an *Ask Adventure* expert breaking out of the departmental corral in the back of the magazine to make his bow on the contents page with a piece of fiction. We'll give H. S. M. Kemp the floor first, for through some inadvertence he never got properly introduced when he joined the *AA* staff a few years ago to answer queries about Northern Saskatchewan. He writes—

Thanks for the invitation to draw up to *Adventure's* camp-fire. I've sat around a few in my time but none that seemed to have the warmth that this one has. As is customary on such an auspicious occasion, I've brought my credentials along.

Born in England and came to Canada at the impressionable age of fifteen. Some time later went to work in a bank. Twenty-five dollars a month and a folding-cot in front of the vault held me for just eight months, then I jumped the job and started in with the Hudson's Bay Company. Got fed up with it; asked to be sent down north. Was. Jumped the Company and transferred my allegiance to the opposition, Revillon Frères. After a spell got fed up some more, so threw in with a bunch of Indians who were "pitching-off" to their camp. Trapped with 'em, took a post-graduate (course) in their language, proved for all time that the Cree Indians are the finest guys ever. Missed "going under the blanket," killed a lot of fur, but after the manner of youngsters the world over, ended up broke. Went back to trading again, then tried commercial fishing. Haven't got thawed out yet and figure that winter-caught whitefish should sell for a dollar a pound. Headed then for civilization and took up a homestead. War—the first World War—came along and after numerous rejections was accepted in an artillery unit. Met a girl whom I shall always consider the world's prize gambler—for she married me. Went overseas; couldn't rate France; came back again and went into cattle. Septicemia wiped out the works in a week; went broke again.

There was only one thing for it—I loaded the wife and two young kids into an eighteen-foot freighter canoe and struck north again for God's Country in the service of Revillon Frères. Ran trading posts for them for the next seven years along the Churchill till we found the kids—there were three of them now—were using Cree as their natural tongue. About this time, too, I wrote a story, sent it to a New York magazine and received money for it. It was the biggest jolt of my life. I wanted to know how long this sort of thing had been going on, and decided to look into the matter more deeply. Still looking, and still getting a lot of fun out of it.

So we came to town and put the kids to school. We're pretty well rooted in civilization and don't think a lot of it. One thing, we don't have to worry about the kids. Or should we? The eldest is a Mounted Policeman; the second is long overseas with an artillery battery; and the youngest is a bomber-pilot with the R.C.A.F. and lamenting loudly that he is not overseas, too. However, he'll get there in time to lay a few eggs on Hitler and his satellites—he hopes. Meanwhile, his mother knits for the Red Cross, I manage to hold a job in town and knock out a bit of Northern fiction on the side.

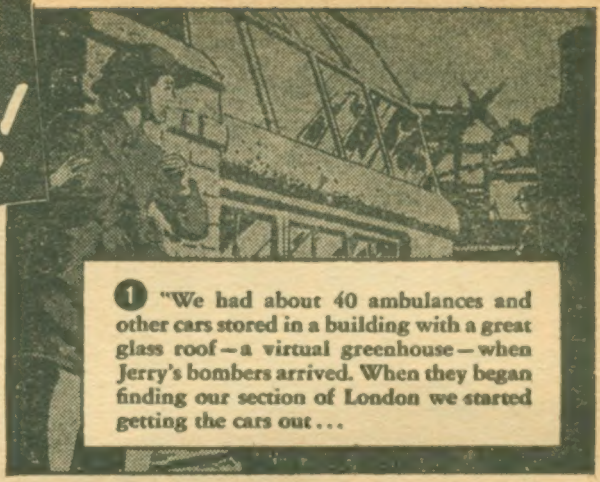
With a brother pretty well at the top of the Mounted Police ladder as an Assistant Commissioner in Ottawa and a son starting up it as a buck constable, Mr. Kemp ought to have enough material available right in the family to make that "bit" of Northern fiction quite a hunk. We hope we get to see some more of it—mighty soon.

CHIPS' adventures in New Guinea in "Gray as in Apple" did not actually happen so far as correspondent Christian

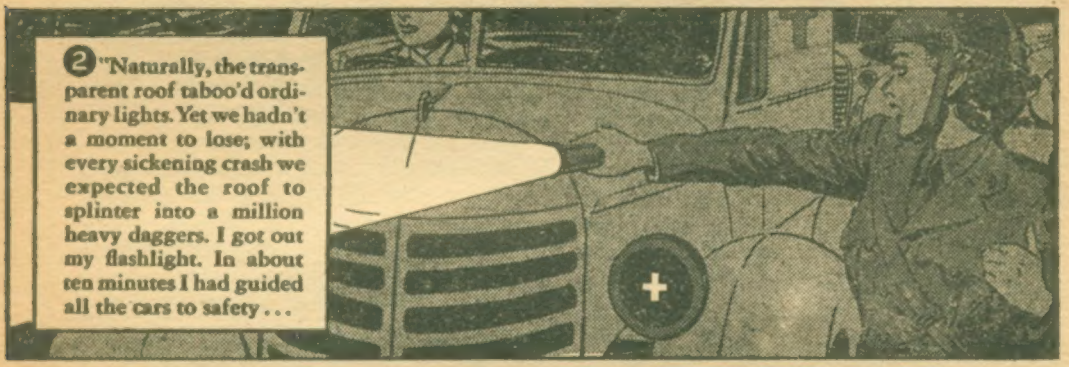
(Continued on page 8)

BLITZED IN A GREENHOUSE!

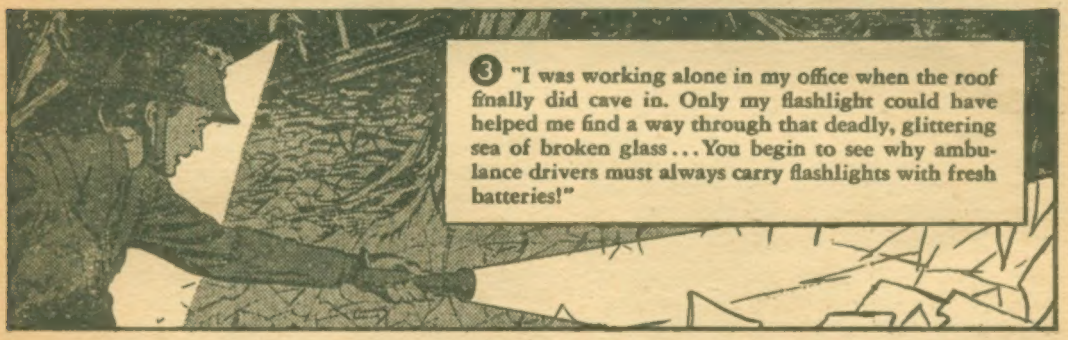
(The exciting experience of Margaret Bridges, of the London Auxiliary Ambulance service, during one of London's heaviest raids. Pretty, attractive 30-year-old Miss Bridges is part English, part American. She volunteered for the ambulance service, reporting for duty just three days before war was declared.)



1 "We had about 40 ambulances and other cars stored in a building with a great glass roof—a virtual greenhouse—when Jerry's bombers arrived. When they began finding our section of London we started getting the cars out...



2 "Naturally, the transparent roof taboo'd ordinary lights. Yet we hadn't a moment to lose; with every sickening crash we expected the roof to splinter into a million heavy daggers. I got out my flashlight. In about ten minutes I had guided all the cars to safety...



3 "I was working alone in my office when the roof finally did cave in. Only my flashlight could have helped me find a way through that deadly, glittering sea of broken glass... You begin to see why ambulance drivers must always carry flashlights with fresh batteries!"

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FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER... *Look for the* DATE-LINE

(Continued from page 6)

Folkard knows, but they might have. Folkard's credentials for writing this truthful fiction include fifteen months spent in the steaming jungles of New Guinea with the frontline fighting troops.

Folkard came from London to Australia when he was eight years old, but at heart he considers himself a complete Australian. At eighteen he began his newspaper career "from the bottom up" by running copy and errands on the staff of the Sydney *Sun*. Now, just turned thirty, he is one of the *Sun's* top-ranking foreign war correspondents.

This summer Folkard passed through the States on his way to a new assignment in London; his skin was still deeply tanned from the fierce New Guinea sun and his health still delicate from two severe bouts with malaria.

The story of Folkard's fifteen months in New Guinea covers the history of the successful land campaign against the Japanese that began in the grim days of early 1942 when the Aussies contacted the enemy outside of Port Moresby to eventually thrust them back over the Owen Stanleys and chase them through Buna, Gona, and clear past Sananada Point. He has now begun work on a book describing his experiences from his "foxhole view" of the New Guinea campaign.

For the Papuan natives who were of the greatest help to the Allied troops unfamiliar with the gruelling ways of jungle life, Folkard has only words of praise: "They served the white man as faithfully as Friday served Robinson Crusoe."

For civilians and military alike he has these words of warning: "The Japanese have proved themselves to be ruthless enemies, capable of fighting under conditions impossible to a white man. Frequently they have lived and fought for weeks behind barricades of rotting human bodies. A war with Japan must therefore literally be a war of extermination."

ROBERT E. MAHAFFAY has covered a lot of territory in thirty-five years. The desert, Mexico, California and the Northwest. He is now a reporter on the Seattle *Times*, squeezing in an occasional piece of fiction between assignments from his managing editor.

HUGH B. CAVE'S "A Few Tons of Plywood" forms the first two chapters of "Long Were the Nights—The Saga of PT Squadron 'X' in the Solomons" which Dodd, Mead & Co. will publish later in the year. Mr. Cave went to Florida, where Montgomery is now stationed, to interview the commander and two of his boat captains and get the story straight from the mouths of the men who lived it. We think you'll want to read the complete account—as stirring an adventure story as we've encountered in many a moon. . . . And speaking of books—Carl D. Lane's "The Fleet in the Forest" is due to appear under the Coward, McCann imprint shortly. The novel as a book will be in slightly more expanded form than we used in our magazine.

VICTOR SHAW, our *Ask Adventure* expert on mining and metallurgy, writes to explain an omission he made in answering Mr. Camberland's query in the September issue on gold mining without water. Mr. Shaw stated—

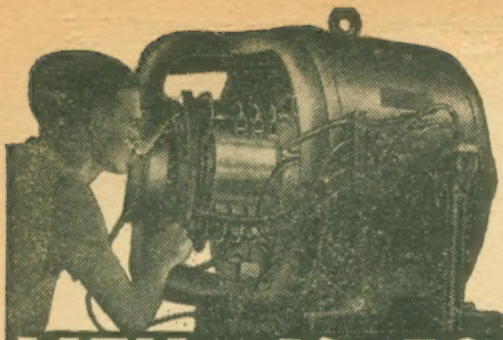
> . . . there is no concentration method yet devised for dry ores that pays a profit on $3.00 ores.

By itself, our expert qualifies, this is not true. His statement should have taken into consideration the amount of tonnage averaging this value and made plain that he was referring to small-quantity operations. He goes on to say—

> It is true that by modern methods of concentration and milling procedure many mines make huge profits on ores of even a third of the stated value of $3.60 a ton. The Alaska-Juneau mine has a record of paying big quarterly dividends on raw crude ore of an average valuation of but $1.11 as it came from the mine, due entirely to their scientific milling methods; *BUT* they were running 350,000 tons monthly through their big reduction mill.

WHENEVER some alert reader spots what he thinks is a technical error in an *Adventure* story we immediately go into a chills-and-fever session that

(Continued on page 153)



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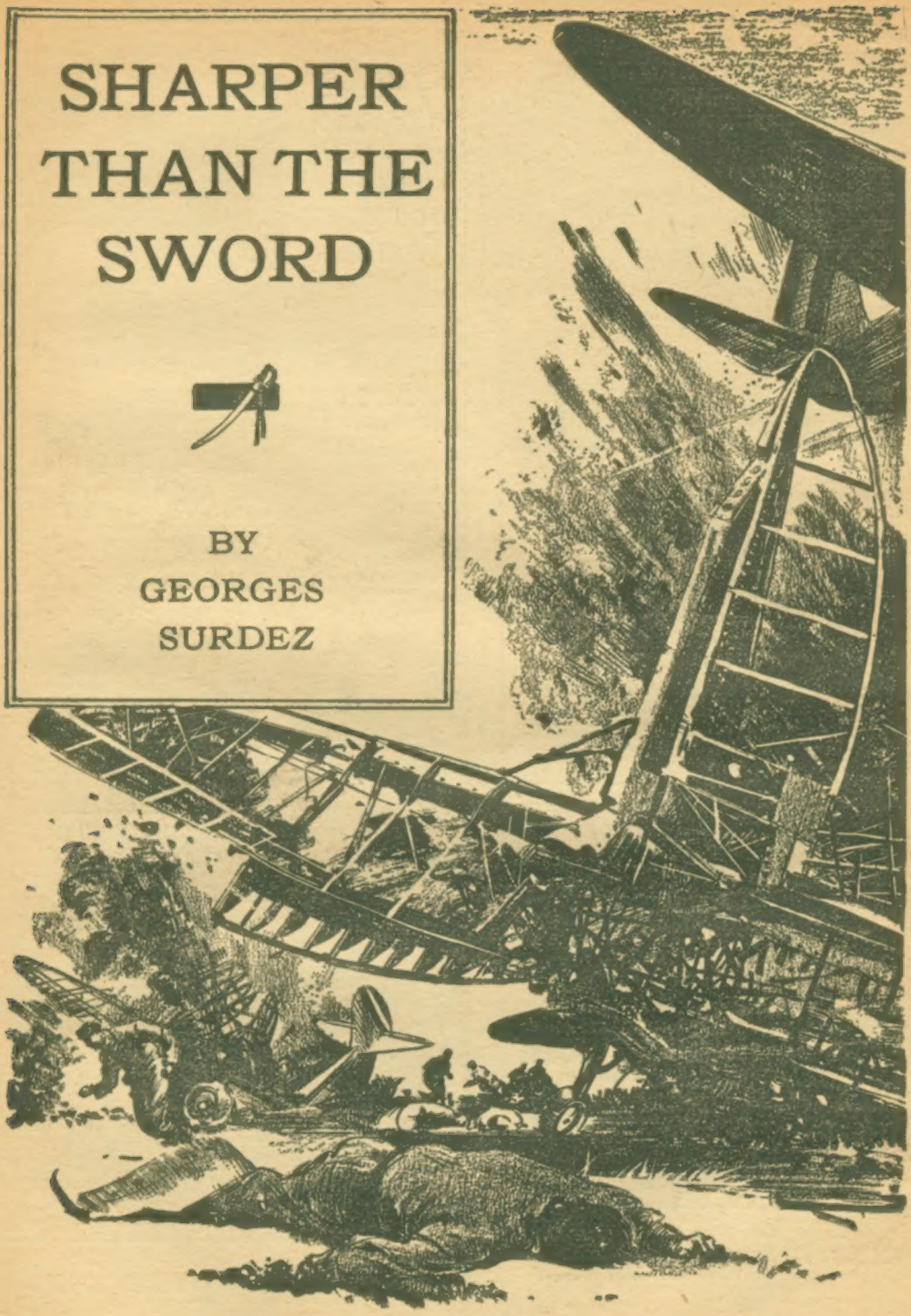
BY
GEORGES
SURDEZ



The blitzkrieg caught Barret's field flatfooted. The sky swarmed with German planes. They came down screeching to drop their eggs, machine-gunned the field as they left.

ILLUSTRATED BY
HAMILTON GREENE

SIXTEEN thousand feet below spread the snowy fields of the Meuse and not very far to the East uncoiled the long, fortified lines in which several million armed men had huddled for dreary months. Five planes commanded by Captain Agnadel were on a routine morning patrol, skimming through a dazzling rosy fog, skirting enormous, cliff-like gray clouds. Five good machines, the sturdy Morane-Saulniers 406, four of them handled by experienced pilots, hung like droning flies against the wintry sky.

Barret was new to the squadron and he was new to the front. He watched his instruments, heeded the orders given

over the radio, and tried his best to store up impressions of his first war flight. He did not expect trouble, he experienced no sensation of impending doom, did not have the slightest premonition of approaching disaster for himself or the nation he served. He was twenty-two years old, strong and healthy, and his thoughts kept turning back to hot coffee and a cigarette.

From time to time, he heard the captain exchange a few words with the operations room at the field, and from time to time, Lieutenant Parisot, whom he had known in training, hummed absent-mindedly. There was no conversation, for the captain discouraged it. Not with loud or profane words, but in his crisp, detached fashion: "Leveque, do you assume that the radio is there for the entertainment of the pilots?"

An odd chap, Agnadel, comparatively young for a captain in the French Air Army, a professional officer, something of a martinet in trifles. Barret rather liked him. He was courteous, and his cold manner might be reserve.

When his thoughts drifted back from coffee and cigarettes, he found himself wondering if he would not have had more excitement and travel had he gone to Finland. There was some rumor that a couple of French squadrons might be detached there. At that, planes would prove more useful than the skis generously offered by the Alpine resorts to the gallant Finns!

"Attention, C 28, attention."

"C 28 listening," Agnadel replied.

The voice from the field droned a message: A formation of Messerschmitts were somewhere near, to the eastward. Calm and laconic, the captain gave the needed orders. There was a chanting rhythm in his voice, at the same time irksome and comforting. The chap at the operations had mentioned fifteen German machines. Fifteen, three to one, and Agnadel meant to attack. A mere nothing.

"Rise one thousand," he suggested quietly.

Barret complied, watched the altimeter. One thousand meters brought them very close to their ceiling. The planes skated greasily, uncertain, heavy.

For seconds, nothing was heard save the steady churning of the Hispanos. Barret felt very fit and alert. There was a tiny flame of speculative dread flickering deep in his brain, but he had that well under control.

"Sighted."

IT WAS Parisot who had spoken. He gave indications, and he was right. There were the triangular silhouettes flitting far below, their canopies metallic blue on one side, reddish on the other, grim dark wedges hurtling through the mist. Barret looked down upon them and muttered between dry lips: "So what?"

"Attention," the voice from the field resumed. "Single plane in the lead is British. Hurricane."

"Understood." Agnadel agreed. He had permitted the Nazis to pass by, now swung after them. There was another stretch of several silent seconds. On level flying, the Germans were gaining rapidly. At last, the captain spoke casually: "*Allons-y.*"

His machine tipped and dove. The others followed.

Barret knew his assigned target in a formation attack, and he picked it out. It was no longer a machine handled by a young man he had never met and whom he was to kill, but something moving to be brought within the range-finder. There came an odd, rubbery sensation, as if time were stretching abnormally, as if he were falling through time as well as space. His belly tightened, his eyes felt large and hard as agate inside the sockets.

The German planes seemed to be bounding upward.

The enemy had not seen them; they were intent on overhauling and dropping the lone Britisher. They followed him through masses of clouds, out again. Barret cast a swift glance over one shoulder: nothing. A fifth of a second, but when he looked forward again, Agnadel had opened fire.

As Barret was about to squeeze the release, his own target had vanished, brusquely and completely. There was something to this, there was! He sighted

it again, some distance below and went after it.

Other planes flashed by, in and out of his line of vision. Some were French, others Germans. The air was streaked with the fleecy fulgurations of the tracers. He kept after his game in a series of diving and climbing turns. The German was before him, at his side, out of sight. At one moment, he felt a strong vibration, glanced to one side, saw holes punching into one wing. When in doubt, dive. He dove. And felt as if he were hanging in space, swung from a rope knotted in his bowels.

A machine fell by, trailing a mane of black smoke shot through with small flames.

"Look out, Captain, look out—"

Barret knew that voice. It was Massieu, an adjutant, a noncom, former volunteer for Madrid, a dour, darkish chap. He was talking, somewhere in the melée. Barret had lost his target, swooped high, banked, seeking it. Two planes dove by in flashes, then a third. The second one was Captain Agnadel's machine. The captain was after the first, the third was after the captain, and might get him. Unless there was a fourth to intervene. Barret felt he must be that fourth.

He plunged after the others.

He came at an angle, from the left, waited for the plane to be in his finder. For an instant, he feared that he would allow the right moment to slip by. He felt his brain, his hands, numbing. Then there was the shuddering of his plane as his machine guns opened. He had not missed his chance. His tracers converged on the mark almost at once. He saw impacts, a wing crumbling. The machine slipped to one side, started to whirl clumsily.

Two planes were falling now, both Germans.

The captain had got his, and was bouncing up again. Barret caught his breath, looked about. The Nazis were heading for home, slashing through the cloud banks. The Britisher had gone, escaped.

"Rally," Agnadel said casually, a little later. It was useless to pursue those planes with Moranes.

The French squadron reformed, intact, and soared peacefully as before. Barret found his jaws were clamped so hard that his teeth ached. He swung his machine back into formation, and a sensation of personal triumph, of intense relief permeated his big body. He would have liked to shout or to sing, to inform the world at large that he was safe, not vulnerable. But the captain was reporting, coldly, facts and locations.

"Cut off oxygen," he said some time later.

The five planes slid onto the lane swept clear of snow on the drome, precisely, neatly, and the ground crews grinned as the pilots alighted. Ten minutes later, Barret had stripped off his flying suit in the room he shared with Parisot, had had his coffee and was finishing a first cigarette.

"Agnadel got two more," Parisot said.

"He's a swell flyer," Barret declared heartily.

Parisot nodded, shrugged. He was a short, wiry man, with a lean, grinning face between a mop of black hair and the fringe of beard then in style among French aviators.

"But his citation would have been posthumous if you hadn't cut in." The cigarette waggled on his lips. "Stuffed-shirt."

"What?"

"You'll get what I mean. He didn't say a word to you on the field just now—"

"Why should he? I was supposed to—"

"Sure, sure. It would be all right if he dropped it. But he'll make a fancy dish of it, a regular ceremony."

Barret did not reply. He knew that while *esprit de corps* and comradeship were not vain words, they existed before the enemy and for outsiders. Within any squadron, personal bickerings, likes and dislikes, minor feuds, were carried on as everywhere. He resolved not to allow Parisot's comments to influence him. The captain had greeted him politely yesterday, and Barret now could admire him as a combat pilot.

A short while after, he was called in by the major commanding, compli-

mented. Agnadel was there. He was perhaps twenty-seven or-eight, rather tall, trimly built. The blue aviation uniform, much like that of a naval officer, fitted him perfectly. His face was smooth and white, the features strong and handsome.

"I must thank Lieutenant Barret, Major," he announced. "But for him, I would not be here." He did a half turn, straightened and his head went back as he offered his slim hand: "Thank you, Barret."

"You will consign all data in your report, Captain," the major said.

Agnadel opened the door of his room and invited Barret to come in. "Smoke?" He produced a box of very long cigarettes, a big lighter. "I have written my family and my fiancée."

"Ah?" Barret shifted uneasily on his feet. "We're all more or less dependent on each other in this business, Captain, as I—"

"Very well put, Barret." The captain obviously sought for some friendly, chatty thing to say. "I understand you are American."

"Yes. My mother was French, however. Born in Nice."

"Business family?"

"Captain? Oh, business, yes. Importers."

"Some Chicago specialty?" Agnadel listened to the answer, filling two glasses from a heavy decanter. "The canteen stuff is perfectly vile. Your health, Barret."

Barret was puzzled. The captain was courteous, friendly, yet his attitude was irritating. There was a foppish loftiness in his speech, an assumption of superiority. Yet he was not a *poseur*. With the war but three months and a few days old, he wore two crosses on his dark blue tunic. This fellow could fly and he could shoot. Conceit alone did not bring down German machines.

Less than an hour later, an incident occurred at the mess table. One of the young officers complained about a dish. Agnadel rested his fork, and he spoke without moving a muscle around his eyes, coldly.

"There are many of us here, Lieutenant, accustomed to more delicate fare. If officers complain of minor discomforts so openly, what can we expect from the men?"

"The men gripe plenty, Captain," Parisot put in.

"I know. Griping is the malady of the French today," Agnadel stated.

Barret remembered that he had said in his room that the canteen cognac was vile. And he saw that he spoke for the benefit of the orderlies. It was a small thing, but it made him uneasy.

BUT in the air, which was what counted, Agnadel was perfect. He was intelligent, careful without being cautious, utterly without personal fear. Odds meant nothing to him, if attack served a purpose. And his voice retained the same calm tone, no matter how hard or dangerous the task ahead.

"He's all right," he told Parisot.

"He's a valiant knight," Parisot conceded, "and we are his devoted men-at-arms." He shrugged: "All right, he has nerve, guts. But he acts the great lord, yet he is not even a grand bourgeois. Gets his dough from the family factory in Seine-et-Oise.

"How do I know? Met a guy while on leave who went to school with him. Agnadel was always conceited, after first-prize every minute. Brought up by his mother, his grandmother and a maiden aunt. The old lady is a bit touched, because one of her ancestors was minister of finance under some king, and they all have a sort of collective mania, delusions of grandeur. When he was three weeks old, his nurse had to refer to '*Monsieur* Laurent's diapers'!"

In fact, Agnadel's manner came close to arrogance on occasions. His attitude toward mechanics, riggers, orderlies, was polite and lofty: "My good friend, will you hand me the wrench?" But Barret believed he saw through these surface traits, and liked him. In return, Agnadel granted him more attention than others.

The captain's score grew longer. The squadron was in the peculiar position of having to show pride in Agnadel while disliking him at the field. His photograph appeared in the papers.

One thing was admitted by all: He never permitted another man to take work or risk off his shoulders. And the slightest criticism from a superior stung him. One afternoon in January, 1940, the major in charge remarked that he had perhaps come in too soon, that German planes were reported in the region he had surveyed.

Agnadel said nothing, saluted and left. Five minutes later, he went up again, alone, with the air as clear as cream soup at ground level. But evidently, visibility was better somewhere above.

For reports of air activity elsewhere along the front were coming in. The operations-room reported that Agnadel did not answer. Barret and the other pilots asked permission to go up, which was refused, as snow had started to fall. Agnadel, a comrade after all, was in danger, and even Parisot spoke well of him now.

He dropped suddenly out of the murk, landed in a feathering of new snow. His plane was so battered, riddled, that it was miraculous that it had held together long enough to bring him back. He shoved back the punctured hood, slid to the ground, and one of his wings quietly detached itself and collapsed. Pilots and mechanics stood about, in an awed circle, hands reaching out to touch holes and tears. Agnadel saluted the major, who had bustled up. He had removed his helmet, and white flecks melted on his hair and face.

"I'm afraid my plane's seriously damaged, *mon commandant*. The machines were Messerschmitt 110's, the new type. Even if we get the Curtisses we have been promised, we'll have our work cut out."

"How many were there?"

"Twenty-seven, Major." He smiled with ineffable irony. "There are still twenty-seven; they're a bit tough for a Morane. Two men, cannon and all that, you know. I'm afraid my section would have been wiped out in actual combat."

"Why did you go?"

"To show there was no personal concern in my order to turn back."

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The major looked at him an instant, turned and walked away.

"Don Quixote!" he grumbled.

But this time all the pilots were with Agnadel. He had been unwilling to risk others in a useless attack without grave military purpose. But when his motive had been questioned, he had gone and dived through the formation. It was one of those foolish, simple things a man had to do. A man—

CHAPTER II

RUMBLE OF DISASTER

A WIDE gateway, protected by wrought-iron grills, opened in the high property wall. Agnadel, who drove like an aviator, applied the brakes and the powerful Panhard sports came to a stop. The gate was locked, guarded by two men wearing steel helmets, carrying carbines.

"The one time I bring a guest out," the captain remarked, "there must be some trouble. Never fails. Sorry, old chap." He hailed the nearest *Garde Mobile*, a corporal. "What's wrong, my friend?"

Barret

"Some trouble at the factory, Captain," the man replied, coming forward. "Oh, it's you, Monsieur Laurent. The manager fired one of the men and the others won't come to work."

"Don't they know there's a war?" Agnadel's rather pale face flushed angrily. "We'll see, we'll see. But what are you doing here at the Chateau?"

"The workmen said they'd send a delegation to see Madame your mother, Captain. Madame would not receive them, and they said they'd come anyway, so she notified the station. There's the two of us here, and two others at the pavilion, and we patrol the grounds every so often."

"That's silly, my lad."

"Silly, is it, Captain? They broke windows at the office building yesterday. We had to make a couple of arrests. Regular Reds, some of them."

The other guard had unlocked the gate, and Agnadel drove on along a cement pathway that circled before a monumental stone stoop. While not altogether worthy of the name "chateau," the building was imposing. Barret figured that it had been built in 1815 or 1820. An elderly manservant, complete to white side-whiskers, and a plump red-faced maid swelling out a silk uniform, came for the baggage.

"Good day, Celestin, good day, Catherine," Agnadel acknowledged their greetings. He alighted and stretched his legs. "I think I better talk to my mother first. These things excite her greatly. Celestin, take care of this gentleman."

The two aviators separated in the main hall, very long, fairly wide, lighted like a chapel by stained-glass windows. There were enormous oil paintings not very good, depicting mythological scenes. He followed Celestin up the broad stairway, along some yards of corridor, was ushered into a vast room.

"Do you wish me to unpack your bag, Monsieur?"

"No, thanks," Barret said. He felt that he should drop a gold pistole in the retainer's palm, but he had no gold coin.

Left alone, he inspected the room.

An immense bed, chests, armchairs. There was running water in a closet, rusty-looking steel-engravings on the walls, showing ships of the Royal Navy in 1825. He lighted a cigarette, swung open the tall French windows, stepped out on a little balcony.

In Spring, Summer and Fall, the scene must have been beautiful. Now, it was a bit bleak and desolate, with the patches of melting snow on the earth, the leafless trees. The rear wall of the property was visible two-hundred meters away, and a two-story building of modern brick, which probably was the pavilion spoken of by the gendarme.

Quite a home his captain had. This house must have forty and more rooms. Difficult to heat in winter, though. He shut the windows. No steam heat, no stove. Hard to install anything with those old fashioned solid walls and floors. That plumbing job must have been a pip, he mused. Solid fittings, though; the faucets looked like valves on a battleship.

The front, the squadron, seemed very remote. He could hear no sound. He felt somewhat cold and hungry. "Could do with a sandwich. I should have asked the old boy." There was no push-button, but a cloth-rope hung near the head of the bed. He reached out, hesitated, stopped. "Hell, it might ring like a church bell. I'll wait for dinner."

HE turned at a knock on the door. The panel, as massive and polished as the top of a bar, swung open, a tray appeared. But instead of the old man's face he expected to see above it, he saw a handsome young man, certainly no older than himself.

"The meals are swell in this dump," the newcomer announced. "But the snacks are scarce unless you're known." He rested the tray on a table. He wore the uniform of a naval ensign. "I bet Laurent just dumped you in here and went off. My name's Guitres."

Barret shook hands, gave his name. "Friend of the captain's?"

"Future brother-in-law. Hungry?"

"Starving."

There were several bottles of wine,

Agnadel

good wine; cold meats, cold chicken, the crustiest bread Barret had tasted in weeks, little pats of butter curled like snails, jams, jellies, pastries. The two young men ate standing up, talking.

"You're due back in forty-eight hours? You're lucky to have something to do. I'm on transfer leave—leaving Saturday for the Mediterranean Station. I hope the Macaronis come into the show—might see some action then." The ensign smiled, shrugged. "Not that I am thirsting for blood, you understand, but you spend years learning a trade and you'd like to work at it at least once. You're the American Laurent wrote us about?"

"I suppose so, yes."

"He likes you a lot." Guitres looked toward the door, shrugged. "Let me be a typical guest and gossip. You look like a regular. Better arrange for something to do afternoons. Pretty stuffy here. Laurent's so used to it he doesn't realize. And the old lady's in a state. The serfs are uprising."

"The serfs?"

"The peasantry, the working men." Guitres laughed. "I've been coming here

since I was a small kid. Periodically, she gets in a blue funk, afraid she'll be shot in the cellar, like the Tsarina. Every time there's a row at the factory, she calls the cops. She says we should be fighting the Bolsheviks, an old admiral I know always yells our enemy are the British, and I wonder what the devil we're doing fighting the Boche." He glanced admiringly at a small tart he held: "Real cream. Never could get them like this anywhere else."

"Trouble at the factory serious?"

"No. The manager's pig-headed. Some old gink they all know and like got soused and called him names. He fired him."

"What do they make, anyway?"

"The Agnadel Accessories. Just now working on a government contract, making magnetos or something like that for planes. Important stuff, because they have to ship the stuff to the constructors or the kites don't get turned out." Guitres started to laugh. "The union and a guy from the Government are deciding the business. But some of the guys have a sense of humor, know the old lady doesn't like to be approached, and perversely try to bring her into it. She acts as if they would put up the guillotine in the courtyard."

Barret sipped his wine carefully.

"Still, our plane production is very slow as it is, and this nonsense should be stopped."

"Agreed." Guitres nodded soberly. "But as I can't do a thing about it, I am not going to burst a blood vessel getting indignant." He walked to the door, opened it and called: "Here I am. Come in. Robert, my sister Olympe."

BARRET laid down his glass carefully. Sister Olympe was something to look at: tall, rangy, yet shapely, with great soft dark eyes and a head of curls as trim and well-fitted as if lathed from ebony by a master craftsman. Her lips were just a little full, her cheekbones high.

"Enchanted, enchanted," Barret murmured, feeling that he was using the word in its real sense at last.

"I have heard much from my fiancé about you, Monsieur Barret," she said. "And I know that but for you Laurent would not be with us now." She paused for breath, and added, as if conferring a decoration: "We shall never forget the gratitude you deserve."

"It was nothing, nothing, Mademoiselle—"

"If it's a normal marriage," Guitres put in," in a few years you'll think that Barret could well have minded his own business—"

"Your jokes are not always in good taste, Odet."

"It's out." Guitres shrugged. "Odet, old man, is the masculine of Odette, a very rare first name that my peculiar father dug up on a calendar."

"You know very well where he got it."

"Yes, and why I'm in the Navy. You never heard of Odet de Guitres, old chap? My father'd tell you all about him, and the frigate *La Boudeuse*, and what he and she did to the British. The British sank her and took him prisoner, but it was a moral victory. We're not related, really. There's an accidental coincidence in names. But my sister—"

"You're not funny. Monsieur Barret, we welcome you."

She walked out of the room and Barret felt as if shades had dropped over the windows.

"Your sister is charming," he said.

"Yes, at the start. Talk to her for thirty minutes and you'll want to slap her. I did, a few times, years ago. You know Laurent? She is like him. All the qualities, but a line in the middle, right on one side, wrong on the other, the right people, the wrong people, the thing to do, the thing not to do." Young de Guitres carefully pried a sliver of chicken loose from the carcass, munched it. "You're in a den of royalists, you know."

"No kidding?" Barret smiled.

"Oh, absolutely. My sister's preparing herself to be a lady-in-waiting, to the queen of France. Come on, I'll get Laurent's bus and we'll drive around."

They were out a couple of hours, passed through sleepy small towns. The war might as well have been going on somewhere on the moon, instead of a few minutes away by air. Guitres turned back, halted the car at a crossing.

"That's the factory over there, small buildings. And that's the rear of the Chateau. That brick thing is a sort of laboratory in which Laurent's old man used to work on his gadgets. Now let's get back for dinner. Your ears will suffer, but your palate won't."

The dinner was served in a vast room, rather dimly lighted, all dark, shining woodwork, napery and silverware. Even the oil portraits on the wall seemed to be about to yawn. Madame Agnadel presided, a wide and querulous woman of fifty-five. There was a wisp of a maiden aunt, who spoke in whispers and smiled like a china doll. There was a skinny, tall old chap with a goat-face —Manager Taraud. There was a short, stout old chap with a white beard, a sort of surly Santa Claus; retired judge Palurchon, and his lady, who said yes, quite, and nodded. Then there were the young people, Agnadel, Guitres, Olympe, and the judge's granddaughter, a small mouth puckering over horsy teeth.

The cooking was memorable. The bisque of crayfish was a marvel, there was a dish of spinach and anchovies that reconciled Barret with vegetables, and the roasted Bresse capon was beyond words. Celestin's lean, yellow hand slid by regularly to fill up glasses with garnet or gold fluids. The conversation was a monologue by the ex-judge, who narrated his famous cases.

AFTER a solemn toast to Agnadel and his savior, there was no talk of the war. The *bombe glacé* was on the table when shufflings and whisperings in the hall became unmistakable. Madame Agnadel rested a plump, veined hand upon her heart, the judge turned butterish, and the captain asked tensely: "May I be excused an instant?"

"Be firm, Laurent, be firm."

"Don't worry, mother."

Barret rose and followed his chief, instinctively. If there was any cause for worry, as there seemed to be, he might be of help. Near the main door, two men were arguing with Celestin, who made a barrier of his body. There was a big cop present also, silent and bored. The two strangers were middle-aged men, neatly dressed in their Sunday best, hats in hand. When Agnadel appeared, one of them stepped forward to meet him, hand offered, then stood still, frozen by a single glance.

"You don't know me, Monsieur Laurent?" He was bald, with a thick gray mustache and a purple nose. He perspired from embarrassment despite the chilly air.

"I know you. What do you want?"

"The delegates from Paris have decided against Old Grandet. It is admitted that he gets drunk, and skips work Monday. But he is a smart worker when sober, and he started with your father more than thirty years ago. He drank then and skipped Mondays, but your father would not fire him."

"Monsieur Taraud manages the factory."

"Of course. We know that." The speaker looked down at the hands clasped on the brim of his damp derby. "We don't ask for justice; it's been decided. We ask for mercy. Grandet has his old wife and four small kids. The older two are in the Army, and his daughter's husband too. If you would talk to the manager and sort—"

"Grandet is a drunkard. His family suffers. Understood. But I repeat: I cannot interfere with the management. Now, good night."

"Monsieur L a u r e n t—" the man pleaded as he reached for Agnadel's arm.

"Don't touch me, please." Agnadel's handsome head snapped back haughtily. He was taller than the veteran workman by half a head, trim in his dark blue uniform, with the bright decorations glittering. And he was the boss. "Now, what would you say if I had the bad taste to enter your home after hours on a factory matter? You've had your say, now I'll have mine. Drunkenness, laziness, any excuse to stop work, any excuse to collect more than your due, with a war going on. You are bad Frenchmen."

The man put on his hat with a quick gesture. "You are a captain, decorated, but you have no right to insult us."

"I didn't invite you here." Agnadel looked at the gendarme. "How did they get in, anyway?"

"Well, they told the lieutenant what they wanted—to see you—and I brought them."

"They've seen me, now let them leave."

"You're showing us the door, Captain?"

"I've tried to be polite."

"Your father'd be ashamed of you. He was a real man. I knew him in 1902, when he was just a mechanic—"

"Great gods! Will you get out?"

The policeman stepped forward and started mumbling reasonable words in an undertone: "—he's sore—nothing doing—his home, you know—only make a mess—write to him—"

Celestin addressed Agnadel: "Monsieur Laurent, it is very true that your father always said that as long as there was a factory Grandet could come to work when he pleased. Perhaps—"

"Do you want to go with them?" Agnadel asked harshly. "No? Then show them out." He turned suddenly, and found Barret behind him. He appeared somewhat taken aback. "Didn't know you were here. Sorry, Barret, but this is an old business, gets on my nerves." He reentered the dining room, kissed his mother's hand before sitting down. "Nothing important, mother."

"I hope you made it clear that—"

"I think they understand, mother. They won't be back."

"About Grandet, I'll bet." Taraud's thin voice slashed out: "You can't run a business with special privileges. He got drunk once too often, made a scene."

"Please—" Madame Agnadel held up one hand. "I'll have indigestion."

"My poor friend," the judge's lady exclaimed.

"While my son and good Frenchmen are fighting the Germans," the hostess went on, "we're having a revolution right among us. I know they're plotting to burn down this house."

"One thing we must grant the Germans," the ex-judge stated, "is discipline. Such a scene would be impossible in Germany. We have pampered the workmen, catered to them. Why? Votes. To be governed by a Blum or a Daladier." He laughed cackling. "Very soon, their women will vote. Then we'll have the two-hour day once a week!"

"Strikes are treason at this time," a soft, gentle voice spoke near Barret—that of Olympe de Guitres. "I should think it would be simple to execute the ringleaders."

"Might be a bit drastic," he suggested.

"BUT necessary. Don't forget, the best men in France are being risked at the front. The common people today are instructed and not educated. Stuffed with nonsense about equality, never told that it must be earned. Tradition gives a nation something to steer by. Base birth was never an obstacle for a strong character. Commoners became powerful under the kings—"

"True. There's the Duchess of Windsor."

"England's decadent, too. I am for—"

"Old ideas and modern dresses?" Barret suggested.

"You're joking."

"No. Let me explain—"

"Barret," de Guitres said, catching his eyes, "how about some fresh air?" Later, as they paced the sanded aisles side by side, he resumed: "I broke it off, because you were about to get into an argument. It's useless, old chap, useless. My sister, Laurent, the others, believe what they say.

"Laurent would have put in some nasty crack and you'd be sore. Those fools live in mirrors, not in reality. Old Man Agnadel wasn't sentimental or soft, but he tolerated Grandet for a reason. He, the big boss, had an intimate friend among the workmen. It meant some sort of a reward for the unlucky guys who plug to make dough for others. Grandet's comrades sense this so well that they fight for him. In the Navy we have old sailors, veteran quartermasters, who have their free speech with admirals and who get drunk without severe punishment. It's an escape-valve. Shows that it's not all rank and machine, that there is a human element somewhere. But Agnadel's too conceited to get it."

"He was pretty stiff," Barret conceded. "A few soft words, a glass of wine, would have sent those guys away feeling fine."

"But he'd have lost face with himself. He has to be sure of himself. If he doubted himself for an instant, he'd collapse." Guitres flicked a cigarette stub through the air. "I've been here a week, got three days to go, have to talk to somebody. Agnadel's synthetic, something made up by his admiring mother and the other old women, a knight without fear or reproach, a gentleman.

"I know the kind. My father is the same. He was Guitres when he went to work for a chartering firm at Nantes upon finishing his military service. But he was de Guitres when he married the owner's daughter and got a partnership. He selected one ancestor out of the lot, forgot the others. My grandfather fished on the Banks, his wife scaled fish at the market.

"I wanted the merchant service. It had to be the Navy. Naval service is tough if you don't have the taste for it. In France, you get a battleship about when you should get a wheel-chair. As soon as this war is over, I'm chucking the gold braid and I'm going to work. That'll mean a break with my people, of course."

Barret understood how his new friend felt. The evening had left him depressed; the absurd arrogance of the people about him annoyed him. They did not even have the excuse of being bred for arrogance. He understood well enough now that Agnadel senior had started as a mechanic. Probably his real fortune had come through war contracts in 1914-1918.

"Don't make a mistake, my sister's a fine girl," Guitres resumed.

"I'll agree with you."

"We always visited here. Liked it, too. But we used to have nicknames for them all. Madame Agnadel was 'The Queen of Sheba,' Laurent was 'The Marquis of Carabas,' the grandmother was 'The Dowager Mummy,' the aunt was 'The Decalcomania.' When my father used to start the tale of Odet the Sailor, she'd slip behind him and pretend she was nailing the flag to the mast.

"I went to the Naval School. I was back on a summer vacation, and she'd caught it. The marriage had been arranged, between her and Laurent. She talked like Madame Agnadel. I like her, and know it will be tough on her. Can you imagine the standards Agnadel will have for a wife and mother?"

"It's going to be a very earnest business, eh?"

"You said it. My sister's already given up tennis."

After lunch the following day, Agnadel suggested to Barret that he might have people to see in Paris. Madame gave the "American," in gratitude for saving her son, an inspiring book by Psichari, properly inscribed.

CHAPTER III

BLITZKRIEG

IN DUE time, Barret rejoined his squadron in Lorraine. The snow was off the ground and the Nazis were growing active. The Curtiss P-36A's had arrived, somewhat faster and much better armed than the others. Captain Agnadel had added one more Nazi to his score, and was satisfied.

"Did you hear from Odet?" Barret asked him.

"That's right, you met him." Agnadel nodded. "He's in Toulon, waiting for a ship. Odd youngster."

The blitzkrieg caught Barret's field flatfooted.

There had been rumors in the squadron, as in every other squadron in France, that it would be sent to Norway. Barret had got up before dawn, although he was not due for duty until the afternoon patrol. He had gone for coffee, and returned to his quarters. The field was deserted, save for a few mechanics working on the planes camouflaged beneath branches. He went on, and as he was not sleepy, started to write a letter. Parisot grumbled in his sleep as usual.

"In the aviation, this has not been wholly a phony war," he put down. "I have lost some good friends and—"

Parisot moved, grunted. Barret was amused. The sleeping man was brushing an imaginary fly from his face with angry sweeps of one hand. Then he himself heard a drone, listened. Yes, it was

the sound of approaching planes, a number of them. The window panes were vibrating. A syncopated, swelling rhythm. German motors!

He had risen when the alert sounded. When the first bomb fell, he was struggling into his suit. The panes shattered, and Parisot leaped upon him, cursing. He believed himself the victim of a joke. Then the next explosion awoke him completely.

"The Boches," he said, "the Boches—"

Barret ran out, headed across the field for his plane. The sky seemed to swarm with German planes, some flying so low that he crouched as he ran. They came down screeching to drop their eggs, machine-gunned the field as they left. Their tracers darted like golden arrows in the early light. One formation was hardly gone when the next struck. From the German side, it was an orderly raid. On the receiving end, everything was confusion, din and death.

In a turmoil of blasts and whistles Barret reached the spot where his machine had been concealed. Smoldering wreckage, mutilated bodies were strewn about. He hesitated a second, ran to the next plane, and that vanished too. The Germans kept coming, demolishing the buildings, the camouflaged shops, the dumps, with admirable precision. The field itself was littered with debris and corpses.

A third plane was being rolled out by its ground crew from under trees, and he made for it, started to climb in. Someone grasped his leg, pulled him back. He turned on the man, pushed him away, but a fist caught him squarely on the nose. "Ah, no you don't, ah no—that's my bus—"

It was Parisot, and he was right, it was his plane. Barret crossed the field again. The bombs continued to drop, bullets tore and rippled on the hard earth, slashed branches. A Curtiss jostled on the flat runway, bobbing, dodging craters. That left him nothing but wrecks and bodies to look at. All the machines held in readiness, save the two in the air, had been smashed.

The major appeared, in slippers, raging. The alert system had been negligent, he howled. Where was this one? That one? The answers tolled monotonously: "Dead, *mon commandant*. Missing, *mon commandant*."

"Who's up now?"

"Captain Agnadel, Major, and Lieutenant Parisot."

"Adjutant Massieu's killed, Major. Lieutenant Desgranges is dead, Major. Sergeant Guillaume is dead, Major—"

"Cut that out. Who's alive?"

"I am, Major," Barret said. "No plane."

"Damned indecent mess all around. Get in touch with the Division immediately. More planes, pilots, everything, damn them."

But reports from all over the front proved that theirs was not an isolated case. Most fields were in shambles, with their machines destroyed on the ground. Everywhere, swarms of bombers were reported, adding up to what amounted to a fantastic figure.

"Poland over again," Barret thought, with a chilly sensation. Then he dismissed that idea. France had the finest army in the world, crack colonial divisions. . .

Agnadel and Parisot returned. The sector was empty of enemy planes. They had seen the last of the bombers vanish over the border, but they had not come close enough to open fire. Barret was in the battered office when the captain reported. He held his helmet in the crook of his left arm, his hair was neat as ever, and he looked freshly shaved. Either the man had no feelings, no emotions, or his self-control was beyond all belief.

Soldiers from a Territorial Battalion encamped nearby were clearing the field, filling holes, erecting temporary shelters, removing the ghastly remnants of shredded men.

"You fellows better get some rest," he said as they left the office. "Patrol at fourteen-thirty."

"He's plenty sore underneath," Parisot told Barret later. "His voice was calm, but that doesn't mean a thing. You could see it the way he flew. I can handle my mill, and it's a bit faster than his, but he got ahead of me, just like he was dragging it forward. I'll never forget it as long as I live."

AT two-thirty, the afternoon patrol started—three pilots instead of five or six—Agnadel, Parisot, Barret. At about three o'clock, between Etival and Senones, they encountered seven Messerschmitt 110's. Previously, possibly upon orders, German fighters did not prove dogged, fled after the first brush.

But a new spirit was in the Nazis. Agnadel attacked, his comrades followed. Three against seven. A German machine left the combat, slid away. Tracers and small caliber shells streaked the air. Parisot sent an enemy down in flames, went to another. Barret attacked a German who was diving upon him, drove him aside. When he looked

A Messerschmitt 110 dove straight at Barret's flaming, defenceless Curtiss. to ram him. But the German swerved, passed under his right wing.

down again, the little lieutenant was in trouble, dodging two foes. And before he could do anything, Parisot's plane was falling, like a stone.

Tracers hailing against his machine forced him to dive. Then, for fifteen or twenty seconds, there was quiet, as their first opponents had left. And a moment later, fifteen Messerschmitts arrived, from above. They had a ceiling of more than twenty-five thousand feet, which gave them much space to play in.

"Pulling out," he heard Agnadel say. He knew what that meant: No more ammunition. And an instant later, when he squeezed his button, nothing happened. He headed down, at the risk of tearing his plane apart, and when he flattened out and streaked ahead, the water of the Raboneau River was not fifty feet below. The French anti-aircraft, machine guns, were pumping projectiles at the Messerschmitts.

Then he rose again, and far to his right he saw Agnadel's machine, ducking and dodging, dragging a formation of Germans around him as a boar drags the hounds. There was nothing he could do, save go and offer himself as an alternate target for the killers. Even for that, he was too late. There was the dreaded smudge of black, then the flickering of flames.

And two 110's were after him again. They knew damn well he was out of ammunition, that they were safe. Perhaps he owed his life to that, for they tried to herd him back toward enemy territory. To make his meaning plainer, one of them passed him, turned, and dove straight for the nose of the Curtiss. Trying to force him to put down his wheels, to surrender in mid-air!

"All right, might as well—" Barret said. There was no heroism about it, no self-sacrifice, he just would not give in. Even had he wished to, he could not have turned aside. It would make a pretty mess, about seven thousand feet in the air, at a combined speed of over six hundred miles. But the German swerved, passed under his right wing.

Both of them, then a third drummed up somewhere, followed him. He looked down and saw his own field, swung wide. He could see the flickering of guns. A cannon shell ripped into his fuselage—he felt the shock, heard the scream of air. Another struck his engine and there was a spray of murky fluid, wisps of black smoke. He was being shot to hell before his helpless comrades.

He headed for the field, saw it come up to hit him, bounced—and then strong hands were helping him out of the hood. "All right, Lieutenant, all right—"

He strode across to the operations-room, vaguely remembered reporting to the major. Then he sat on his cot, and he was thinking that the whole gang was gone, that not a plane was left, and only one pilot, himself. He drank some hot soup an orderly brought in, then slept. It was dusk when he awoke.

He went toward the mess room. The engineers had been around, and boarded up some of the holes. There were people in the bar, people who were pilots without planes, birds shorn of their wings. He stopped short of the door, to steady himself. Massieu wouldn't be there, nor Parisot, nor anyone.

"They must have let us have five hundred bombs—"

"That's nothing. Pursuit Two-Four at Rambervillers got more than a thousand in exactly ten minutes by the clock. Same time we did, to the second. Almost two bombs a minute. That's bombing."

He went in and hands pulled him on a bench, a drink was pushed in front of him. "Eh, Barret, why didn't you ask your friends in—they liked you! We thought the major would strangle you when you brought his last crate in like a heap of junk—" Someone spread a newspaper in front of him: "You're dreaming, old chap, this paper says we have mastery of the sky!"

Barret steadied, managed to speak, to laugh. Then he saw a trim dark silhouette at the end of the bar, saw the flash of a big lighter. He rose and went near. It was Agnadel.

"How did you get here, Laurent?" he asked.

It was the first time he had used the first name. Agnadel looked a trifle surprised, lifted his brows.

"Usual means—parachute and auto, Barret."

"I thought you were roasted—"

"I took my time jumping." Agnadel sipped at his glass. "Didn't want to be potted in the air, you understand. May I offer you something?"

"Thanks, Captain." Barret gave his order. "Hear anything of Parisot?" Barret hoped for another miracle.

"Crashed near St. Michel."

"Dead?"

"Very. I'm informed you gave quite a show here."

"Yes. Tough day, Captain."

"Very." Agnadel's lips curved into a slight smile. "And only the first, my friend. There are more coming." His head snapped back. "While we've been talking, they've been working. Organization and discipline. They're a formidable people, the Boche."

AGNADEL was right, harder days were ahead.

For while the tank and shock divisions were crumbling the French ground forces, German aviation took control of the sky. Its efficiency, information, numbers, all seemed unreal, fabulous. Dorniers, Heinkels, Junkers, Messerschmitts came by the twenty, forty, sixty, seventy at a time, superimposed from five hundred to thirty thousand feet. The struggles of the weak French Air Army against these clouds of attackers were pathetic, almost ridiculous—save for the fact that brave men died.

The French pilots went up against odds—one against three, against five, ten, fifteen. They dropped three German planes for every one they lost, probably killed four or five Nazis for one of their own. In a victorious campaign, their sublime courage and devotion to a cause would have won them the admiration of the world.

Like the legendary cavalry leaders of the Napoleonic Era, they had their mounts shot from under them repeatedly. Replacement planes came in driblets. And the new type of air warfare was a greedy consumer of planes. As the Germans advanced, the field had to be moved back, again and again, fifty miles a leap. Tons of impedimenta moved in trucks, along roads choked with refugees, infantry, artillery. Yet when the pilots returned, there were the ground crews ready to repair the machines, to refuel them, to provide ammunition.

Around Agnadel and Barret, new groups of young pilots formed. The faces changed often. Men were killed anonymously. A lieutenant might report in the morning, be on patrol an hour later, be killed and forgotten by noon.

On one occasion, Captain Agnadel came into the pilots' room, a farmhouse kitchen and announced, "We start in twenty minutes. Protection over Fournelon. Lieutenant—?"

"Fleury, Captain."

"Lieutenant Fleury, I believe you're senior—" Agnadel gave the particulars to the man who would succeed him in charge if anything befell—"and that's all."

They started out, nine Curtisses.

French troops were to detrain at the Fournelon railroad station in an hour, to board trucks and rush to plug a gap in the shifting front. As a matter of course, the Germans would know this, as they apparently knew everything. They would send bombers.

The Curtisses were over the town very soon. Nice little town, red and gray roofs patched with the green of little parks and squares with new steeples on the churches. The Germans had demolished the old ones, in 1917. The town was intact, but bled its population onto the roads. Not very far, as planes travel, Barret could see other towns burning, white, black, yellowish smokes forming patches on the green.

"Here they are."

Three formations of Heinkels, at least fifteen planes in each, each plane equipped with five machine guns.

"First mine. Second, Fleury. Third, Barret," Agnadel chanted. He reported to the field over the radio. Then he gave the signal to attack.

It was a superb fight that followed. The pursuit machines swooped on the bombers, which looked like enormous, glassy-eyed beetles. Seven Heinkels were knocked down, the others forced to jettison their bombs and to flee. Lieutenant Fleury's machine was set flaming, and he collected an eighth bomber on his way down.

Tons of impedimenta moved in trucks, along roads choked with refugees, infantry, artillery. Heinkels blasted the station. Dorniers caught the troops on the trucks.

Down below, hundreds of soldiers lived on a while because he died. But the Curtisses had to go back to refuel and there were no others to take their place, while Heinkels came to blast the station and Dorniers caught the troops on the trucks.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEATH THROES OF A NATION

IN THE fortnight that followed, Barret was shot down twice. Each episode was a feverish nightmare. There was the risk of being fired upon while suspended from the parachute, not only by the enemy but by nervous French soldiers or a suspicious peasant who believed all 'chutists Germans. There followed the hunt for a telephone, a telephone that would work, to report to the field, then the search for transportation, snarling interviews with half-crazed army officers, stolid police officials whose

book of regulations had not foreseen a national debacle.

As the days passed, in ceaseless activity, always retreating, Barret came near breaking under the strain. He slept anywhere, ate anything. His body was unutterably weary, covered with bruises. His eyes throbbed from lack of sleep, his neck was sore, chaffed from the constant craning and turning while aloft. For days he did not bathe, he could not shave. His clothing was in rags. He craved American coffee, a dish of hot oatmeal with sugar and cream.

Others were as tired as he was. Once, he witnessed a ludicrous, pathetic incident. One of the pilots had just returned from patrol. He slid to the ground, started to walk away, stumbled and fell. He chanced to pick himself up facing the machine he had just left. He walked back to it and started to climb in, until the mechanics laughed, stopped him.

Only Captain Agnadel did not change. His eyes were red-rimmed, his neck stiff, but he contrived to have a relatively fresh uniform, he was shaved as carefully as ever. Not that he spared himself. He had added eight official victories to the seven he had before the blitzkrieg. The squadron was waiting for new planes when news was confirmed that Paris had been taken by the Nazis.

"That means your home is in the occupied zone, Captain."

"Considering the geographical factors," Agnadel replied, "that appears an inescapable conclusion."

The tone, the smile, the words, were supercilious and cold. Barret had intended to voice sympathy, and he lost patience at the implied rebuff. "You go to the devil," he grumbled, turning away brusquely.

"A moment, I beg you, Barret." Agnadel reflected a second. "I did not mean to offend you. We are brothers-in-arms—" no other man but Agnadel could have used that pompous sentence so casually. "But it has been on my mind, you know. A weakness."

"You're entitled to worry about your mother."

"Yet I shouldn't. My mother is a

French woman and knows how to meet adversity with dignity." Agnadel's voice went on smoothly: "You are not entirely French, so perhaps you don't quite understand what we are going through."

"No, I've been laughing for six weeks."

"What preys on my mind, Barret, is the situation. I thought things would be better when Marshal Petain took charge. He is a fine soldier and a pious man. But I am very much afraid, Barret, that France will surrender. In that case, what is my duty?"

"I don't know, Captain," Barret said. "It's all how you feel. As for me, I'll go to North Africa—some sort of government will take refuge there and fight on."

"But if Marshal Petain, who is a right-thinking man, orders us to lay down our arms, can I disobey?" Agnadel was very sincere when he said: "I want to fight on. Call it vanity, if you wish, but I feel personally humiliated." He sighed. "I wish I could confer with my mother, Barret. She is a lady of great good sense and never would allow a compromise with honor."

Barret nodded silently. He remembered a rather shrill voice: "Be firm, Laurent, be firm," when her big, handsome, decorated son was about to face two elderly workmen.

As soon as Petain sent out his broadcast calling on the Germans for "a soldier's truce," many aviators decided not to be trapped by the Armistice. It was now certain that France would be out of the war for an indefinite period, and it was obviously no use to sacrifice the few remaining machines and the trained flyers trying to stop the inevitable.

What remained of the squadron was at a small field along the Rhone Valley, with the remnants of various other air units.

"I'm leaving tomorrow, Captain," Barret informed Agnadel. He had a chance to cross the Mediterranean Sea in a Potez Bomber, and it was the general belief that some French leaders would escape and organize North Africa for resistance.

"Have you room for one more?" Agnadel asked. "All right, count me in. The real France, for which I fight, is unbeaten and untouched. It was betrayed by democratic politicians, by its Communist workmen. Perhaps a taste of German control will sober them."

BUT that very afternoon a half-dozen Heinkels passed by, probably bound for Marseilles. Barret prepared to go. And there was but one pursuit plane on the field in condition to take off.

"Sorry, Barret, but this is one time I use my rank."

"Very well, Captain."

There was nothing else for him to say. He watched his chief take off with his usual, impeccable skill. He was envious, because this would be the last chance at a German for some time. Agnadel gained altitude rapidly, vanished in the sunlight. Barret watched the dwindling specks of the Heinkels through glasses. Just as they melted into the blue, the formation scattered. Barret knew that Agnadel had attacked.

Not wholly a Quixotic gesture. A bomber gone meant so many bombs the less to drop on unfortunate citizens. The captain was doing his job to the last minute. Barret went to the radio-room.

"No word from Captain Agnadel since he attacked. We have other reports. Planes are fighting very high above the river. A couple have gone down." Thirty minutes later, the lieutenant in charge called to Barret again: "I'm very sorry, old man. Your captain caught it. A French plane fell in some wood—that must be his. No parachute was seen." He concluded briefly: "He got two."

At dawn the next morning, the same officer called on Barret. "Want to drive out with me? They expected to pick up Agnadel in a basket. But he's alive. Walked out of that crash with a broken arm and a couple of bullet wounds."

"Sorry, I—" Barret was embarrassed.

"Ah, yes." The other looked at the ready pack, smiled. "He'll understand. But wasn't he in on this? That makes you short one man. How about me?"

So that Captain Agnadel received no visitors that day.

Flying Officer Barret did not set foot on the soil of France again for two years.

(To Be Concluded)

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COLLISION HAZARD

BY L. L. FOREMAN

A HIGH wave broke thunderously over the bow of the *Cathar* while she wallowed in a wide trough. The water streamed from her deck as she lifted herself onto the swell, and for a brief spell she seemed to hang on there, looking the situation over. The wind and the rain roared up behind her. Imperturbably, she nosed into the trough.

Detridge rolled over in his bunk, winked on his flashlight, and made the time to be nine minutes before midnight. He would have time to duck into the galley before taking over the deadwatch. He struggled into his damp, heavy coat, wishing he had something really dry to wear.

In the galley he found Chief Engineer McAllister and First Assistant Rengle, both of them tired-eyed and unshaven. They were swigging hot coffee, but while Detridge was getting his cup filled they got ready to leave. Rengle remarked that it was a rotten night. McAllister grunted, and Detridge said a little too politely, "It certainly is." Then they left. Detridge drank his coffee alone, and went

ILLUSTRATED BY SAMUEL G. CAHAN

The Cathar *struck the great, dark hull with a grinding crash of mangled steel plates and splintering wood.*

up on the bridge with three minutes to spare. Charner, senior watch officer, gave him the course, pressure and revolutions, and at precisely midnight went off watch, saying nothing more. He too had tired eyes, and moved heavily.

Detridge slowly paced the bridge from wing to wing. His mind idled lazily, until the monotony of rise and fall stirred it to seek occupation. He was afraid of that. He tried to feed it problems and speculations, things that had to do with the future, but it insisted upon going back to an old playtoy. At last he wearily gave in; his mind, triumphant and unhindered, quickly beat its perseverance into a rhythm, in time with his footsteps. *Full reverse, starboard engine. Full ahead, port engine. Right rudder, hard over. And if you can't avoid a collision, mister, be rammed!*

He thought, "Lord, if it ever happens again. . . !"

He was not the kind of man you would expect to find aboard a rough bucket like the *Cathar*. He was slender and neat, and had what you might call a modern type of face—keen, rather sensitive and harried, conventionally undistinguished by a mask of semi-professional amiability. He was a Naval Reserve man, and you could be led to think that he had probably been somebody's confidential secretary before the war. Actually, he had been third mate on the *S. S. Golden Star*, a high-priced cruising liner whereon the third mate was expected to qualify as entertainment director and diplomat—which qualifications Detridge had creditably filled. He kept a picture of the beautiful *Golden Star* in his cabin, and sometimes he looked at it and sighed a little.

He had dreamed of being assigned to a sleekly dangerous destroyer, but the telegram from the Navy Department had ordered him to report for duty to the Commanding Officer, *U. S. S. Cathar*. The *Cathar* was a Navy tugboat, a big ocean-going work horse, squat and ungraceful, with a bow as blunt as her stern. She carried a three-inch gun forward, but it would be a desperate day before anybody ordered her out to fight anything but dirty weather.

Bitter disappointment had made him forget tact, in his first meeting with the *Cathar's* commander. "I can't help feeling that there's been a mistake, sir," he said. "I don't know anything about these buckets—hem—tugboats, I mean. Never served on one. Never expected to."

Captain Gary was an enlisted man risen from the deck. He was large and blocky, and had cool, wide-awake eyes overhung with ponderous brows. He scanned Detridge's face and said nothing.

"I specialized in gunnery in the Reserve," Detridge said. "You already have a gunnery officer, I believe, so. . . ." He paused uncomfortably under the cool stare.

Captain Gary's massive face remained blank. "Know anything about communications?" he inquired. His voice was surprisingly soft and mild.

"Well—yes, a little."

"Ever stood regular watch?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you'll be in charge of communications, and stand your watch. Mr. Charner and I will take care of the tugboating."

"Very well, sir. But don't you think—"

"I think you'll find this isn't too bad a boat, Mr. Detridge," the captain said, "after you get settled down to her."

"Yes, sir," Detridge said formally. It had not occurred to him that a man could really like a tugboat. He looked curiously at the captain, and from the cool eyes he learned that the captain was reading his thoughts and resenting them.

THEN came the little things, the embarrassing little slips which he should have laughed off but didn't. Such as the morning the *Cathar* got its orders to cast off, and he had stood on the bridge, somewhat self-consciously and with no great pride, and rung Stand By to the engine-room. And Captain Gary, his eyes faintly amused, had said softly, "That's hardly necessary, Mr. Detridge. We're always standing by, night and day, you'll find, on this—er—'bucket'."

He had imagined the whole engine-room gang chuckling below. It made him red-faced, and drew him into himself, so at once he was off on the wrong foot. A tugboat, even a big Navy tugboat, is no place for a thin skin. The officers and crew of the *Cathar* were known to be a tough and capable crowd, all regulars, given to rude speech and abrasive humor. They shoved and babied the great haughty ships around, and looked with paternal tolerance on them. Detridge had had no experience with men like these and he was never at ease with them.

Charner shared the same cabin with Detridge, so he couldn't help noticing the picture of the *Golden Star*, aristocrat of steamers, pinned on the wall. He happened to mention it, one day during dinner. "What was her tonnage?" he asked.

"Ten thousand," Detridge answered. He warmed with proud reminiscence. "Lord, she had everything. Swimming pool, ballroom, game rooms, and her promenade decks were. . . ." He went

on talking about her, and it seemed to him that he was making an impression, that they were listening with respect, for nobody interrupted him and they were silent for a minute after he finished.

McAllister bit into a pickle, reflectively. "I was on a floating limousine like that once," he remarked. "There were two dance bands and a whole slew of bar stewards, and they were kept going all the time. I saw the damnedest things." He grinned. "But I was in the black gang. I didn't belong on deck, capering around in one o' those white monkey-suits."

Detridge flushed, taking that as a personal affront, and not the first. When making any reference to deck officers in general, the chief engineer often barbed it with a comicality at their expense. "On the *Golden Star*," Detridge said deliberately, "we had separate mess tables for the engineers and the deck officers. I certainly liked that ship."

They flicked glances at him. Charner said quickly, as if in apology to them, "Reason I mentioned her, I've seen her lately. They've made an honest woman of the old—I mean, they've converted her to cargo. They've ripped out her promenade decks and she's running between Portland and Jacksonville, carrying lumber. But they couldn't convert that fancy clipper bow of hers. That's how I knew her in that picture. She makes a kind of weird-looking freighter. Hard to handle, too, likely."

"Some things," stated McAllister flatly, rising from the table, "you just can't convert worth a damn."

They were silent, and by their silence they agreed with him. Detridge felt their cold disapproval. Having always been an amiable man, heretofore living amidst amiable surroundings, he now suffered.

BUT the big thing, the haunting thing, had come upon him at night while he had the bridge. The *Cathar* had been rolling along cautiously at half speed through an Atlantic fog and a high sea, bound for Norfolk from a run to Boston with Navy Yard supplies. The fog was thinning here and there, but no ships carried lights of any kind these wartime days, and the collision hazard was always present. Alone on the bridge, Detridge watched the changing wall of darkness ahead, his eyes aching from the strain. Sometimes that wall had the semi-transparency of ordinary night darkness, and the sea could be seen, black, with shreds of silver veil where the waves broke on the long swells. Then the tugboat would nose into another patch of fog, and everything was muffled again in a murkily opaque shroud.

It was during a fogless spell that the lookout on the gun platform called sharply, "On the bridge! Something floating, two points starboard off the bow!"

Detridge looked and saw the thing. It rose and fell lazily, lapped by the water, round, glistening, sinister. "Left rudder—hard over!" he called. The *Cathar* heeled over. Her half speed would not clear her bow in time. "Full ahead!" The steady throb of the engines suddenly hastened, and the tugboat swung faster. Detridge watched the glistening object slide by, barely missing, and go dancing in the wake.

The lookout shouted, "There's another'n—starboard quarter!"

Still swinging over, the *Cathar* passed that one and another farther on. Then more, spaced out in a line. Detridge spoke quietly into the wheelhouse speaking tube, and the tugboat ran along that dotted line, keeping it well to starboard. Then she found more fog, and the line was lost; there was no way of knowing how far on it extended. Detridge rang Slow, and sent a signalman below for the captain.

A great shadow moved through the fog, coming directly across the path of the tugboat, from the right. The lookouts called their warnings, and Detridge gave his command to the wheelhouse. "Right rudder." The *Cathar* turned right from her course, and the moving gray shadow, a ship, passed by with its dull murmur of sound. The tugboat rolled in the wake of her, and Detridge discovered that his throat ached. It had been close, that; very close. Still, it did not leave him rattled. This ever-present collision hazard was a nightmare, but he

prided himself on having good nerves.

"Sail ho!" called the gun platform lookout.

"Where away?"

"Starboard beam."

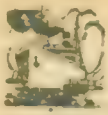
This second ship passed abaft of the tug, with plenty of clearance. Detridge thought: *Convoy. We're right in its tracks.* He decided to bring the tug about and get out of here, and go back and locate that bobbing line. His voice was still cool, giving the command to the wheelhouse. To a signalman he said, "Sound a blast on the whistle."

THE *Cathar* let out a bellow. It was almost immediately answered by a deafening chorus of ship's whistles, each one urgently trying to give sound of its position. Detridge sucked in his cheeks. Damn this fool fog. He had to get the *Cathar* out of here before she ran into trouble, but he didn't dare to increase her speed. She was turning about on a wide curve. When the curve was completed he checked it, and began to feel relief. So far, so good. Now to run through that outside line of the convoy again. Captain Gary would be coming up in a minute. He was usually fast in getting to the bridge when called.

The lookouts shouted warnings again, this time in rapid, urgent tones. "Sail ho—port bow!"

Detridge saw her at once. The *Cathar* had turned about and was recrossing the outer line of the convoy just in time to run afoul of another ship belonging to it. She came gliding through the fog from the left, her course and that of the tug converging at right angles. She was so close that Detridge saw no room in which to dodge her. He saw only two alternatives of helm maneuvering to choose from: right rudder and be rammed, or left rudder and ram her. He was standing by the speaking tube, and he called into it, "Left rudder."

Heavier feet than his hit the bridge. A heavier body than his brushed him aside. "Order countermanded!" rapped the voice of Captain Gary. "Right rudder—hard over. Full reverse, starboard engine. Full ahead, port engine."



THE *Cathar* swerved ponderously into the steamer's path, and it seemed that she must be run down. Then her two engines picked up, and she lurched, shuddering. The deck rose and canted over as she heeled sharply around, and the steamer missed crashing into her stern by a matter of feet.

"Slow ahead, both engines," spoke the captain evenly, and the tug obeyed like a well trained pup coming to heel. He turned to Detridge. "Were you going to ram her, mister?"

"I didn't think there was room to avoid her, sir. I—I guess I'm used to bigger ships than this." Acute awareness of his own ineptness, as compared with the captain's masterful handling, made Detridge speak jerkily, so low-voiced that the captain had to step closer to hear him. "I'm not used to handling this tugboat yet."

"That's understandable. But it doesn't answer my question."

"We had the right of way, sir."

"Over a convoy? I hardly think a court martial would've cleared you on that point, if you'd hit that ship!"

Detridge bit his lip. "We were on slow. We couldn't have done her much damage. But she would've run us under if she'd hit us, with her weight and speed. I thought it was—was . . ." He searched for the right words. "I thought I was choosing the lesser evil, for all concerned."

"I see. The lesser evil, eh?" Captain Gary's voice was almost kind. "That's the right attitude, mister, but I take it you've never seen what a thousand tons of tugboat can do to a ship's plates. We could have sunk that troopship, don't think we couldn't!"

Detridge paled. "Troopship?"

"Uh-huh. You're liable to meet with ammunition ships, too, and oil tankers, and such. Our business isn't to sink 'em, Mr. Detridge, no matter who's got the right of way. You saw what I did. Reverse one engine, full ahead on the other, and put the wheel hard over. If there's any room at all, this tugboat'll skin out of trouble. She's got the power. And if there isn't the room—if there's got to be a collision—be rammed!" The captain

put an eye to the compass. "Considerably off course, weren't you?"

"Yes, sir," Detridge said shakenly. "I had to dodge a string of floating mines."

"Mines?" The captain straightened up, and Charner, who had followed him up onto the bridge, sucked his teeth and shoved his hands deeply into his pockets. "Floating mines? H'm. We'll have to look into that."

Half an hour later, searching along at slow speed, the *Cathar* passed a trawler. A voice on the trawler hailed, "Ahoy, there! Swing off. You're heading into our nets."

Calmly, Captain Gary gave the change of course. "Floats," he said. "Not mines. Fishermen's floats. A natural mistake, Mr. Detridge. Any man could make it, in this weather. But that other thing—I'll put it down to inexperience, this time. But remember, please. . . ."

The quietness left his tone. He rapped harshly, "Any time you can'd avoid a collision like that—be rammed! *That's* your lesser evil, mister!"

IN the *Cathar's* radio shack, the operator on duty jotted down the message that clicked in his receiver, and when he got it all he sent it to Detridge. It was in code, and Detridge, as communications officer, had charge of the code book. Detridge called Charner to relieve him on the bridge, and he went below and decoded the message. It was from the Fire Island station, and it ran: *U.S.S. Billeto reported fallen out of convoy. Engines disabled. Fears anchors cannot hold in storm. Proceed at once to her assistance with all speed. Position . . .*

"Right about there," said Charner, pricking a spot on the chart. "Not far off the Shinnecock shoals. She must be dragging, to be that far in. Damned storm's driving her onto the shoals. We should reach her in about three hours, if nothing goes wrong." He glanced up at where the moon should have been. "Devil of a job, if we've got to tow her in this weather. She's a big old girl, that *Billeto*. Troopship, isn't she?"

The captain nodded. "Give me the course."

"One-eighty."

"Make it—and tell McAllister we want all he can get out of his engines," said the captain, and Detridge passed the order on.

The *Cathar* had been passing Block Island when she caught the message, bound northward up the coast to Boston, after being five days out on a salvage job. Charner and the captain had been up on deck most of the five days, soaked through and with no time to change clothes. They both had bad colds, and were tired out. From the matter-of-fact way they spoke of the imperiled troopship, they might have been discussing a routine job. But Detridge noticed how Captain Gary kept peering into the driving rain for a glimpse of the storm's light-streak. Charner swore less than usual, whenever he had to blow his chafed nose.

At one o'clock, with the *Cathar* smashing through a heavy sea on her new course, the captain said to Charner, "You might's well turn in and get some sleep. No sense killing ourselves. Need a bright eye when we get to her."

Charner left, hunched over and huddled in his wet coat. The captain kept shivering. He looked at Detridge a few times, and at last broke a silence. "I'm going below for an hour. Call me if this storm gets worse." His teeth chattered while he spoke; he clenched them and scowled.

"Very well, sir."

The captain started off, and came back. "I don't need to remind you that we'll be running across the coastal shipping lane," he said, speaking through his teeth. "Better put on extra lookouts and keep a sharp watch."

"Yes, sir."

Full reverse, starboard engine. Full ahead, port engine. Right rudder . . .

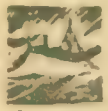
THE nagging rhythm returned as Detridge paced the bridge. He knew that the captain had been hesitant about turning the bridge over to him, with the *Cathar* plowing at top speed through crowded waters and thick weather. Only sickness and a desperate need of rest could have caused the captain to do it.

A fresh front of wind struck, and the

rain pelted down harder. The *Cathar* pitched and rolled, took seas over her bow, and shook them off and kept on going into the blinding curtain of rain and high spray. It was hardly possible to see much farther than the jackstaff, at times. Detridge thought about the *Billeto*. He had never been on a disabled ship in bad weather. He wondered about the thoughts of all those men—troops and crew—aboard a helpless ship with dragging anchors, driven across waters that were the hunting grounds of enemy subs, toward the shoals of Shinnecock. A destroyer or two would probably be standing by, hounding around her to protect her from subs, but what could a destroyer do to protect a ship of her size from being driven by the storm onto the shoals? They weren't built for running unconcernedly right up to her and shoving her around, and laying a couple of six-inch hawsers on her and yanking her home. They weren't tugboats, and it took a squat, powerful, gutty tugboat to do those rough tricks.

For a while Detridge's speculations drove that other thing from his mind, but it crept back again. *Full reverse, starboard engine. Full ahead, port engine. Right rudder* . . . And if the other ship was converging upon you from the left—from the port bow—then you reversed those commands. You swung the tug in the other direction. Success depended upon the margin of space between you and that ship. But even if the margin was hopelessly small, you did it, anyway. You did it and got rammed, smashed, sunk. You went down, knowing you had chosen the lesser evil, that the big ship would stay afloat with nothing more to harm her than a crumpled bow.

He had no fear that he would stumble over the commands, if the occasion cropped up again. His mind had rehearsed them so often, he thought he would probably call them automatically as a reflex action, before consciously thinking of them. That disturbed him some. Automatic action was unsafe, a mental hazard, as he had proved when he did the thing that he would have done aboard the *Golden Star*, and chose the alternative of ramming that ship. That was what habit of mind did to you. That was bad. He must watch himself at all times, and force his intelligence to assume full control, independently of mental habit and reaction.



THE *Cathar* plunged her nose into a trough, flung water high into the air, and came up out of it. "Sail ho! Port bow!" shouted a lookout. Then another: "She's gonna hit us!"

Detridge was not startled. It was as if a routine matter had occurred, something that was to be expected. The collision hazard was high, any night at sea. His mind clicked the commands: *Full reverse, starboard engine. Full ahead, port engine. Right rudder, hard over.*

His intelligence questioned it as he took two steps to the wheelhouse speaking tube. As he got there, the sharp, sleek bow of the coming ship emerged through the rain and darkness, much too close for any kind of dodging maneuver. A collision was inevitable. *If you can't avoid a collision, mister, be rammed!*

Intelligence said something else.

"Left rudder," Detridge called steadily, and rang Full Astern on the engine room telegraph.

The *Cathar* nosed over, suddenly shuddering under the strain of reversed engines. Her speed slackened off, but her momentum was carrying her along at a good clip when she ran full into the ship. She struck the great dark hull with a grinding crash of mangled steel plates and splintering wood. She stopped with her bow rammed into the huge hole that she had made, and everything movable aboard her went tumbling. There were yells from the wounded ship, and from the tug.

Detridge rang Stop Engines. "Sound collision quarters," he ordered, and he knew pretty well what to expect when Captain Gary came stamping up onto the bridge with Charner behind him.

As he went below to his cabin, peremptorily relieved of duty by a snarled command from the captain, he speculated as to what a court martial would do to him for this.

GOOD work horse that she was, the *Cathar* steadily towed without halt the disabled, storm-battered troopship, *Billeto*. The storm had blown itself out, and the sun broke through and offered some meager warmth to the weary crews of the tug and the steamer. The *Cathar's* blunt bow was crumpled, but her forward compartments still held tight. It had been something of a fight, getting the big *Billeto* in tow; she had been very close to the Shinnecock shoals.

In the wardroom of the *Cathar*, Captain Gary said stonily, "It doesn't excuse you, that the *Daltry* carried lumber that kept her afloat after you rammed her. She could've been almost anything —another troopship, for all you knew." His eyes glinted with a recurrence of cold anger. "It wasn't inexperience this time. It was deliberate!"

"Yes, sir," Detridge said. "There wasn't time to dodge her, so—"

"The lesser evil again?" The captain's tone was savagely sarcastic.

"Yes, sir. If she'd rammed us with that sharp bow . . . Well, we never would've got to the *Billeto*. I thought it best to ram her, inasmuch as her cargo would keep her afloat."

"I could agree that you made the right choice, mister, if I could forget that it was a damned dirty night. You couldn't tell what she was!"

"Beg your pardon, sir," Detridge said humbly, "but I knew that clipper bow of hers right away. She used to be the *Golden Star*, before they converted her to carrying lumber."

Captain Gary was silent for a long, long time, just looking at him. He scowled, cleared his sore throat noisily, and then said. "H'm." several times. "Queer, mighty queer," he grumbled at last. "I'll check up on that. We'll see. We'll see. H'm. As proud as you sounded off about that ship—then you ram this bucket into her. Queer. H'm."

"Yes, sir," Detridge said, but it seemed an inadequate thing to say, so he added with some embarrassment, "It's a pretty good bucket—tugboat, I mean."

"Won't be long, you go ramming her into everything you see," growled the captain. A chill shook him. He was wet, sick and cold, and graciousness was not to be expected of him. "H'm. I'm—uh —restoring you to duty. Pending investigation, of course. Go up and relieve Charner on the bridge."

He must have carried a new air about him, for McAllister gave him an almost fraternal nod when he ran into him; and Charner greeted him on the bridge with a tired, inquiring grin, the grin of a brother officer who had also been in trouble with the Old Man in his time.

ONE LITTLE SLIP

BY H. S. M. KEMP

THE half-dozen loungers in George Elliott's trading-store quit arguing war-strategy and diverted their attention to an outfit that had swung down the river and was now heading up the hill towards the post. The outfit consisted of six tandem-hitched huskies, a high-headed toboggan, and an oldish man in a parka scrabbling up the hill at the toboggan's tail.

Those in the store made comment. Elliott, the florid-faced, bull-necked trader, identified the traveler as Dad Morrow; a Mounted Police corporal in buffalo jacket and rat-skin service cap mentioned that old Dad drove good dogs; a third man remarked that the dogs seemed to be hauling quite a load. "Meat, likely," he guessed.

It was meat, all right, but not the sort Jerry Webb had in mind. For when the dogs had scratched their way up the hill and were finally halted by Dad Morrow, the tightly-lashed outline of the load gave its explanation far more succinctly than mere words could have done.

Old Dad's load was the canvas-wrapped body of a man.

In heavy silence the old-timer entered the store. He nodded gravely in answer to George Elliott's grunt of welcome; then he drew out his pipe, tamped it and lit a match.

The match burned down towards his fingers. Finally he spoke.

"Bill," he observed, and jerked his head in the general direction of his sleigh.

With his pipe going he spoke again. "Yeah, cashed in last night."

The letdown of the strain in the store could almost be felt. Elliott scowled. "Bill?" he echoed. "Bill East? How come he cashed in? Not account of that cold he had?"

Old Dad flung his match into the box of sawdust. "Yeah, only I guess it was more than a cold. Likely pneumonia."

Prompted, Dad Morrow went on to explain. Bill East, his partner on the fox-farm fifteen miles up the Muskeg River, had had a cold for about ten days. Last night he felt pretty groggy, and just before midnight he crawled from his bed and went outside. Oh, sure, he shouldn't of, but they knew the ornery jughead

Joe Ryan felt a bit sick when they finally dragged out the charred body.

ILLUSTRATED BY MONTE CREWS

Bill could be. Bill didn't want to be fussed with; he could look after himself. Anyways, when he came in he gave a sort of a funny cough and went over—*kerplunk!* on his face. Had a hemorrhage from his lungs. And before Dad could h'ist him onto the bunk again, he was deader'n Julius Caesar!

There were frowns, grunts of commiseration, then the Mounted Policeman took charge of things. To Trader Elliott he said, "Your warehouse is about empty. What's wrong with skidding him in there till we get straightened out?"

Elliott guessed it would be all right, so the corporal nodded to Dad Morrow to pull around to the warehouse door.

They unloaded the canvas-wrapped body and carried it inside. At least, the others did; Corporal Joe Ryan merely superintended things. Then after examining the body, identifying it and noting

its general condition, he had the trader lock up again and led the way back to the store.

THERE, over the big stove, the corporal lit a cigarette. He, like Elliott the trader, was red-faced, but with a girth so ample in a Mounted Policeman that rumor had it his uniform was tailored for him by a tent-and-awning company. But despite his girth, his easy-going ways and his aversion to physical effort, Corporal Joe Ryan knew his job and made a job of it. Now he turned once more to Elliott.

"Bill'll need a coffin. This stuff of burying a feller in a canvas tarp is all right in its way, but it's not good enough for a white man. You got lumber, so how about putting Jerry to work?"

Jerry Webb was Elliott's storeman, roustabout and general bull-cook. He was also a fair carpenter, and—according to Corporal Ryan's convictions—a better bootlegger. The corporal had never yet caught him over a mash-tub nor had he actually seen him peddling the resultant concoction to the Nitchies around the post, but when he did catch him, Joe Ryan promised himself that Jerry Webb would go over the hill for quite some considerable spell. In the meantime, let him get at that coffin.

Elliott agreed. "Jerry'll make her; but when's the funeral?"

It was recalled that the missionary-parson, Mr. Banks, was away on a pastoral trip amongst his scattered flock. "Which won't give us no proper service," old Dad Morrow pointed out. "Still," he suggested, "if you could try your hand, Corp . . . ?"

The corporal would. He'd done it before and he'd do it again.

"I'll bury him, Dad," he agreed. "Only we should get at it early in the morning. I'm catching the noon plane for town."

Elliott assured them that Jerry Webb would start the coffin at once and that Bill East would be safely nailed down and ready for planting before bedtime. "Anyways, before midnight," he amended.

"And what happens now?" the corporal asked Dad Morrow. "I mean with you and the business. Going to run her alone?"

Dad didn't think so. There were over a hundred foxes on the ranch, and he himself wasn't as young as he used to be. "No, if I get an offer I'll sell out and go live with my daughter in B.C. She and her husband, Jimmy, have been after me quite a spell."

The policeman agreed that it might be a good idea. One of the men in the store, a red-haired trapper named Lewis, wanted to know what the fox-ranch was worth as it stood. Old Dan shrugged. He figured that ten thousand dollars would pay for the animals, the buildings, the wire-fencing and all the labor that had gone into the place. "But if I got six thousand bucks offered, I'd take it. My share of that, and what I got salted away, would start me up ag'in at the Coast all right."

"I ain't got six thousand cents," the corporal told Dad Morrow, "so don't look at me. But mebbe George'll buy you out. The ranch'd be a nice side-line to his trading."

Elliott gave a bull-necked shrug. "Sure, if a feller had six thousand he could lay his hands on. Me, though," and he wiped his mustache, "when I get through buyin' my next year's outfit, I won't have enough left over to buy half-a-dozen of beer."

THAT night the dogs in the settlement put more feeling than usual into their customary serenade. A toboggan that passed the corporal's door at midnight started the Police huskies to barking, and one howl from them was a signal for every dog in the place to pour out his heart in wolfish melancholy. As he punched his pillow and slid to sleep again, Joe Ryan said that he could, if he wished, become fanciful and say that the dogs were as clairvoyant as they were credited to be and knew that Death was there amongst them.

But daylight brought a grin for the whimsies of the night, and it was a very practical Joe Ryan who conducted the funeral service and saw the crepe-covered coffin lowered into its shallow grave.

Followed two weeks' leave in town for the corporal, then he returned to Muskeg Lake to find a similar but decidedly more grisly chore on his hands.

It was all ready and waiting for him. Going into George Elliott's trading post he met Elliott himself, "Spotty Jim" Hanshaw, the game guardian, and the trapper who had asked Dad Morrow the value of his ranch, red-headed Pete Lewis. Elliott was studying a paper he held in his hand, but he quit it long enough to give the corporal a "Hullo!" and to ask what sort of a time he had had in town. But it was doubtful if he heard Ryan's reply, for almost at once he handed the policeman the weather-beaten piece of paper.

"Here's a funny one," he growled. "Come from Ike Monson. Read it, then Pete'll tell you the rest."

The paper had come from Ike Monson, for the corporal recognized Monson's angular style of writing; but it was the words themselves that puzzled him—"I am in bad shape with frozen feet. Come up to the shack and help me. Ike."

The corporal looked across at Elliott. "What's it all mean?"

The trader shrugged. "Pete says he found it wedged in a stick down on the ice in front of Ike's shack on Greenwater Lake."

"Well?" prompted the corporal. "Did he go up to the shack? Or don't he read English?"

"Readin' English didn't do him no good. There wasn't no shack to go to."

"Eh?"

"Sure. The shack was burned down."

Joe Ryan now got the story from Pete Lewis himself. The red-headed trapper had come down past Monson's cabin on his way to the settlement for additional supplies. The dog-road skirted the shoreline, which was doubtless why Monson had placed the note where he did—to catch the attention of anyone passing by and who might not otherwise have dropped in. Lewis would have dropped in anyway had there been a shack to drop into, but the place was gutted, and all that remained of it were a few charred wall-logs and the caved-in sod-and-pole roof.

"And Ike?" suggested the corporal. "Where's he?"

Inside, Lewis guessed, if the note meant anything at all.

Joe Ryan read the two lines of the note again. He remembered Ike Monson, although he had only run into the man a couple of times—a bearded trapper who had his camp on distant Greenwater Lake. On his occasional trips into the settlement, Monson stayed with George Elliott overnight, then hit back for his camp almost at once. According to Elliott, Monson had a good education, was as much prospector as a trapper, and had come north when his wife had died in civilization some years before.

Joe Ryan glanced up from the note, spoke to Elliott. "Well, what d'you make of it?"

"Dunno," admitted the trader. "Looks like Ike froze his feet somehow, couldn't walk and knew he was up against it. Pete was sayin' he saw tracks around the place where Ike had been crawling on his hands and knees. They led to the wood-pile and back, and to where he'd left this note."

"Sure. But the fire, and the cabin burning down?"

"Your guess is as good as mine. What happens if a man freezes and don't get attention?"

"Gangrene sets in," answered the corporal. "His feet rot and the pain is hellish."

"O.K.," grunted Elliot. "So he went haywire and accidentally set fire to the place. Or mebbe it was a spark from the stove. The question is, what are you doing about it and what I can do to help?"

Joe Ryan sighed, figured it would be an eighty-mile trip over to Greenwater Lake. There wouldn't be any road to speak of, and that meant snowshoe-work. He sighed again. "When did you get in, Lewis?"

The trapper told him. "Just about the time your plane landed."

"And when are you heading back?"

"Tomorrow. I got to get some grub from George, rest the dogs a spell, then pull right out."

"O.K.," said Joe Ryan. "I guess I'll be pulling with you."

HE did; so did George Elliott, after leaving the business in the care of his storeman, Jerry Webb. They used the Seekeep River trail to within a mile or so of Monson's cabin, and, despite the corporal's forebodings, found it in good shape. In mid-afternoon of the second day they reached their destination.

Monson was something of a novelty to the Muskeg Lake country in that he preferred skis and a packsack for getting around in preference to a train of dogs. On his longer trips he towed a light sleigh behind him, and the sleigh, an Indian-made three-board toboggan, now leaned against the warehouse. Another thing, and this to the corporal was significant, was that no split wood was at the woodpile. There were a few logs there, but even the chips seemed to have been gathered up. Most significant of all, however, were peculiar tracks that showed behind the cabin and led off to nearby rabbit runways. They were queer, draggy tracks that terminated in two or three snares. In the last of the snares was the strangled corpse of a rabbit.

"Get it?" grunted the corporal. "Ike was up against it in more ways than one. Lord knows how long he had those frozen feet, but he must have run out of grub. That's why he crawled around and tried to snare him some rabbits. Well, let's take a look at the shack."

There was an axe at the woodpile. With it the corporal smashed the padlock on the warehouse and looked in. There were a few empty boxes, a can of kerosene, canoe-paddles, a fish-net and a shovel. With the shovel and the axe and considerable labor they dug into the debris of the cabin, and finally uncovered the grisly thing they had expected to find—first the legs, then the body, and finally the whole cremated cadaver of what had once been a man.

Hardened as he was to death in its least attractive forms, Joe Ryan felt a bit sick when they finally dragged out the body. It looked scarcely human—charred, blackened, with eyeless sockets and clenched and gleaming teeth. He spat in revulsion and wiped sweat from his face.

"Ike went out the hard way. Here's hoping the smoke got him, and he never knew much about it."

After a few moments he fetched a canvas tarp from his sleigh. Together they rolled the remains onto it.

"Yeah, tough for Ike," he admitted again. "And also tough for us. We got to haul him eighty miles."

Lewis, banging dust and ashes from his parka, offered a suggestion. "If you go south and east, you could hit the Vermilion trail and come out at Macey on the Hudson Bay Railway. That'd just be a sixty-mile haul."

The corporal pondered the point. "And when we get there, Macey's only a water-tank and a siding. No, we'd better hit home."

CHAPTER II

STRANGE BEQUEST

THE circumstances surrounding the tragedy indicated an inquest, but the inquest was a mere matter of form. The six good men and true whom Joe Ryan corralled decided that Ike Monson had met his death through misadventure; and they brought in such a verdict in almost record time. But one matter puzzled the corporal, and this matter he mentioned to George Elliott.

"Who's Ike's next-of-kin, the guy to notify regarding his death?"

They were in George Elliott's store. The trader frowned.

"I wouldn't know, although I've heard him speak of a brother down East."

"Got his address?"

"I might be able to get it." Elliott went on to explain. "Ike's had a tin box of papers put away in my safe for some time. He said they were sort of valuable, and would I look after them." The trader jerked his head towards the connecting office. "Come on, I'll show you."

The box that Elliott produced from the recesses of his big iron safe was a japanned metal affair, locked, but without a key. The corporal shook it, yanked on the handle, then suggested they pry the thing open. Elliott produced a screwdriver, and after some little trouble he

succeeded in forcing the lid. Together they examined the contents.

The next ten minutes were interesting ones, for while they found no record of Monson's brother's address nor the address of any of his relatives, they came on matters of more lively concern.

One was a photograph of a man resembling Ike Monson himself, but well-dressed and wearing glasses. There was no need of any notation to explain his identity, but there it was on the back in Ike Monson's scrawl—"John." Beneath was a date—"1939."

"The brother you were speaking about," grunted Joe Ryan.

The other item of interest was an insurance policy. It was a retirement-investment policy; and under its provisions, Ike Monson was to receive eighty dollars a month from his sixtieth birthday on, or, in case of death, his beneficiary would fall heir to eight thousand dollars in cash.

An odd feature was that the beneficiary was Ike's wife, Mabel.

"Funny he wouldn't change that," observed Joe Ryan. "The wife is supposed to have been dead some years. Nice for the brother, though. He'll get the eight thousands bucks."

BUT a further discovery upset this contention. Put away in an envelope by itself was Ike Monson's will. The will, a curious document, began by stating that its maker had not been too successful, consequently there was little to leave to anyone. However, what estate there was, together with the proceeds of the insurance policy, were to go to George Elliott. The will was signed "Ivan Monson."

Joe Ryan had been reading the will aloud, and when the final clause came out, Elliott's surprised exclamation was one of sheer disbelief. "To me, did you say? *To me?*"

The corporal nodded frowningly, but read on. "'I leave everything to George Elliott because he grubstaked me when nobody else would and because he treated me like the white man he is.' And the will," observed Joe Ryan, "is witnessed by 'J. Webb.' J. Webb," he repeated, "who is probably our old friend Jerry."

Elliott shot out a big hand. "Gimme a look. Must be something haywire about it!"

But there seemed nothing wrong with the will at all. It was legal, painstakingly written in Monson's own peculiar style and bearing a date-line of a twelvemonth earlier.

"Just a minute," said Elliott. He lumbered to the door, opened it and yelled Jerry Webb's name. The sound of chopping that had been going on outside suddenly ceased, and a moment later the post handyman came in. Elliott led the way to the office and there showed Webb the will. "Seen this before?" he asked him.

Webb squinted at it. "Sure I have. Ain't that my signature on the bottom?"

"Your something," sniffed Elliott. "Though I wouldn't call it no signature. But how come you're mixed up in this? And when did it all happen?"

Jerry Webb squirted tobacco-juice into the stove. He was pint-size, yellow-haired, with rattish features, but he seemed not at all put out by the question. "How come I got mixed up in it? Because I was on the spot, I guess. When Ike was in here a year ago he asked me to witness his signature to a paper. I said O.K., and did it. Then he said it was his will, and because anything could happen to a feller, he wanted you to get his stuff and the only bit of money he had—the money from his insurance."

Elliott seemed baffled. "But why did he leave it to me?"

"Yeah, why?" agreed Jerry. "Because he was crazy, I guess."

Elliott glowered. "None of yer lip!" he blared. "I mean, why didn't he leave it to his brother?"

"Well," shrugged Webb, "I ast him that. He said that except for a friend sendin' him his brother's picture some time ago, he'd never heard of him for twenty years. Then ag'in, this brother was a railroader and pretty well fixed."

Elliott seemed puzzled as ever. "I still don't understand it. I grubstaked the guy, sure I did; but I never figured I was taking much risk. Certainly not enough to be left no eight thousand dollars."

AT Muskeg Lake, where the advent of a litter of pups is news, George Elliott's windfall gained the equivalent of headline publicity. In short time, tidings of it reached Dad Morrow, alone on his fox-ranch up the Muskeg River. Before dusk, old Dad was in the settlement.

He found George Elliott in his store, and promptly went to work on him. Dad had a fox-ranch to sell, to give away, prack'ly, for six thousand bucks, and George Elliott had the price to buy. Elliott grinned the easy grin of a big man and pointed out that insofar as the provisions of the will were concerned, he hadn't received a five-cent piece. Moreover, he suggested, the will might be contested.

"Contested, hogwash!" snorted Dad Morrow. "What can they contest it on?"

They argued back and forth, and at last Elliott admitted he would be tickled to death to own the fox-ranch. And if—just if— he ever did get the eight thousand, well, he and Dad might do business.

But down in his Police detachment, after hearing this bit of news, a fat corporal went into a huddle with himself. Hunched over a table with a magnifying glass, Corporal Joe Ryan spent considerable time with a letter Ike Monson had once written him regarding a commercial fishing license, and the disturbing will. But the results of his labors told Joe Ryan that the will was bona fide, and that only left him less satisfied than ever. The trouble was that George Elliott stood to inherit eight thousand dollars just at the time he could best use it.

By vocation and training, Joe Ryan was a suspicious soul; and he knew rafts of men who had been eased out of the mortal picture for a good deal less than eight thousand bucks. Of course, he couldn't say that Ike Monson had been eased out, but even if he did so, he knew he could never prove it. The trouble was that Monson could have been bumped off by a dozen methods, but thanks to that almost all-consuming fire, not one of 'em might show up. True, a bullet-wound or a bashed-in skull could be detected, but that was about all. Joe Ryan didn't relish the job, but he knew he'd just have to give that horrible body a going-over before it was put away. The clothing had all been burned off, but somewhere in the charred flesh he might find a wound.

As for the validity of his suspicions, they needed little bolstering. Jerry Webb had witnessed the will; and somehow Joe Ryan couldn't picture Jerry Webb keeping its conditions to himself. Webb worked for George Elliott, the new beneficiary; and if Webb told Elliott and Elliott needed six thousand dollars of the eight to buy up Dad Morrow's well-paying fox-farm, the actual getting of the money shouldn't be too tough.

But theories and suspicions and half-baked ideas were no good to take into court. Neither would it be good business to pass them on in their raw state to the insurance company. So when a check-over of the charred body yielded nothing in the way of injury or wound, all Joe Ryan could do was to shrug heavy shoulders, order a burial, and watch at the mousehole of the case for anything that might appear.

FOR three weeks he watched; then as a diversion, a mail-plane from the south brought John Monson.

The policeman recognized him at once from his photograph and was aware of some resemblance between John Monson and Ike. Ike, though, would be older, and he didn't wear glasses.

They met in the log-walled detachment. Monson introduced himself and went on to say that he had heard of his brother's tragic end.

Joe nodded. "Yeah. Too bad. Ike went out the tough way."

"It was just by luck that I heard of it at all," said Monson. "A friend ran across a note of it in an Eastern paper, thought the name a bit uncommon and showed it to me. In fact, I didn't know Ivan—or Ike, as you call him—was living in this part of the world."

"He'd been here some years."

"And that's what brought me in. I figured I'd be too late to do much but thought I should come up anyway. Conscience, perhaps, for being out of touch with him so long."

Joe Ryan nodded again. "Not much you can do now. We buried him."

"I suppose. But what about his wife and family?"

"Well, there's no wife," Joe Ryan answered. "And as far as I know, no family. The wife died before he came up here."

"I never knew that," John Monson said simply. After a moment he asked, "But his affairs, his business affairs, y'know; were they taken care of?"

"Wasn't much to take care of," the policeman told him. "His estate consisted of a trapping outfit and an insurance policy; and some duck here in the village gets that."

Monson seemed interested. "Insurance policy?" he asked. "Worth anything?"

Joe shrugged. "Just eight thousand. Only I made a little error. This duck isn't *going* to get it; he's got it already. Got it four days ago and promptly invested it in a fox-farm."

John Monson nodded. He gave the matter thought. "Well, I suppose I can't kick. Ivan and I had just about forgotten each other. And if he chose to leave his money to a friend, there's nothing I can do about it. Or," he added, "that I'd want to do about it, either."

The corporal gave a grudging, "Yeah. Same goes for me, I guess. It was his money, not mine." Suddenly he asked, "What's your line of business?"

John Monson seemed surprised at the question. "I'm a railroader. Conductor. Why?"

"Then you've been around; should know enough not to go off the deep end. So if I told you that I didn't like the way Ike died and when he died and the rest of it, you'd know enough to keep things under your hat."

"Of course I would," Monson agreed, and waited for Joe Ryan to say more.

JOE said it—told him the facts surrounding the drawing of the will and the burning-down of the cabin. He ended by saying, "And knowing all this and guessing a whole lot more, I can't prove a thing or disprove it either."

Monson pulled out a package of cigarettes, offered one to Joe, lighted one himself. He wanted to know more about George Elliott, and about Jerry Webb. The story that Joe Ryan had given made an impression on him. They discussed it for some time. Then suddenly they heard the roar of an airplane engine.

Monson sprang up. "I left my suitcase aboard. Should go down and get it."

"Go ahead," advised Joe Ryan. "I'll be here when you get back."

But Monson was gone some little time. When he returned he was carrying the suitcase and had things to report.

"The pilot dumped it in Elliott's store. I met him—Elliott. This fellow Webb was there, and a trapper named Lewis."

"Oh, yeah, Pete Lewis. The guy who reported your brother's death. But I didn't know he was in the village."

"He cleared out of the store soon after I arrived," Monson said, "but Webb stuck around. And Elliott—well, when I introduced myself, he said he was pleased to meet me. But he's a liar. He wasn't pleased to meet me at all."

"And what did he say?"

"The general thing—that it was too bad about Ike, and that he hoped I wasn't sore about Ike leaving him the money."

Joe Ryan smiled. "At least he admitted the legacy. That's something."

But Monson was not responsive to the corporal's humor. "I want to see more of him."

"You will," promised Joe. "Your plane won't be back for a couple of days. And in a couple of days a lot can happen."

Joe Ryan might have been a prophet, for his prediction was accurately fulfilled.

CHAPTER III

DEATH PAYS A CALL

MUSKEG LAKE was no tourist resort. It was a run-of-the-mill northern settlement consisting of Elliot's trading post, a mission, and a scattering of Indian tepees and shacks. Consequently there was no hotel to offer accommodation for John Monson. Joe Ryan batched, and while he did well enough

for himself, he was taking in no boarders. But as "Spotty Jim" Hanshaw was married to a halfbreed girl, the corporal arranged for Monson to stay with the game guardian.

But Monson was up at the detachment that night; and soon afterwards George Elliott and two commercial fishermen from Pelican Lake, Bill Joy and Nick Stirton, walked in. The fishermen wanted a poker-game, and revenge.

"Last time," said Stirton, "this limb of the law took us for a ride. Bill and me aim to get some back."

Joe Ryan grinned. He heaved himself out of his chair and made Monson acquainted. "Brother of Ike," he explained.

Neither of the fishermen had known Ike but both had heard of his death. They expressed sympathy, and then looked towards the corporal. "Well, Joe, do we get it?"

"Revenge, eh?" observed Joe Ryan. "Well, I'll be happy to oblige. Only," he pointed out, "mebbe Mr. Monson don't play cards."

Monson smiled. "Anyone who graduates from a railway caboose knows what the spots are for."

The game began. It was soon evident that John Monson knew all about the spots and the joker too. Elliott lost to him from the start, and the only time the trader failed to go down was when an Indian called at the detachment and took him off to the store. Elliott returned rather late, and when the game broke up around midnight, most of his chips had gone across the table.

"But don't worry," he told Monson with evident feeling. "Come down to my place tomorrow night and we'll see if your luck holds good."

But when it came to turning up anything new regarding the death of Ike, John Monson had no luck at all. He confessed that much to the corporal the following afternoon.

"Don't know what to think. I was up

It was a man—curled up in a grotesque attitude—his feet in the kitchen, his body sprawled through the doorway onto the snow. . . .

in Elliott's house today and went after him again. He seemed to get sore at me wanting to know so much, but that might be natural." Monson shook his head. "I'm inclined to believe the guy."

ELLIOTT'S soreness seemed to be lasting; for when the poker-session convened again that night, the trader was plainly ill-humored. Mainly his feeling was directed against Monson. He gave the man the curtest of his nods, though he was scarcely more gracious to any of the others.

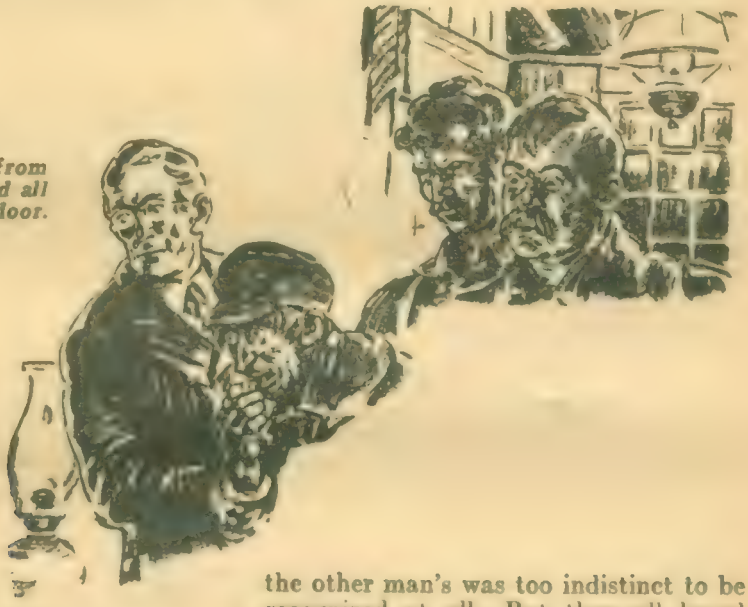
As on the evening before, the players were Joe Ryan, Elliott, Monson, and the two Pelican Lake fishermen, Nick Stirton and Bill Joy. Elliott muttered something about Jerry Webb being along later, then cleared the table and threw a green, four-point blanket over it.

They played in the main room of Elliott's house. Beyond this was the kitchen. As the game warmed up, so did the players. Coats came off, and Elliott grumblingly apologized for the dryness of the session. He had ordered three cases of beer by the mail-plane, but the mugs in town had forgotten to shoot 'em through.

"When Jerry gets here we'll have some coffee," he promised. "In the meantime, the water in the pail's ice-cold."

Occasionally one or the other of the players accepted the invitation. The water-pail was on a bench in the kitchen, where a low-turned lamp was burning, and it was while Monson was out for a drink that a knock came on the kitchen door.

Those in the room heard the knock, then Monson's voice and another's. Later, Corporal Joe Ryan said that while he could identify John Monson's voice, the other man's was too indistinct to be recognized at all. But they all heard him asking for George Elliott.



. . . They got up from the table, startled, and all pushed over to the door.

Elliott swore. Always some cluck wantin' him when he was busy. But he excused himself and shoved up from the table.

Monson returned as the corporal was shuffling the cards. "Customer?" the policeman suggested.

Monson shrugged. "Might be. Said he'd only keep him a minute."

They waited. In the meantime the policeman rolled a cigarette and the two fishermen loaded pipes. As the minutes lengthened the room grew chill.

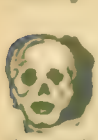
"Shut the door, George!" called Joe Ryan.

"Sure!" added Bill Joy. "And talk inside."

They got no response from George

Elliott, but a moment later there was a blundering thud and a blast of profanity in the undeniable voice of Jerry Webb.

They got up from the table, startled, and in a body pushed over to the door. In the low-turned light of the lamp they saw Webb rubbing a shin and looking behind him. "Some blasted dog out there—" Then he bit his words off shortly. "Goshamighty, it's a man!"



IT WAS a man. He was curled up in a grotesque attitude. His feet were in the kitchen but his body was sprawled through the doorway and onto the hard-packed snow.

They dragged him in, turned up the light. George Elliott never knew it, but one of his callers had been Death.

For his head was crushed and bloody and his eyes were protruding. As Corporal Joe Ryan said, in harsh, short-clipped words, "The guy who called waited for him, see? Stood just outside the door and to one side of it. And when George shoved his head out, slugged him." The corporal shot a question at John Monson. "What was he like, this guy?"

Monson couldn't say. "With the lamp turned low, I couldn't see him properly. But he wore a cap, and asked if George Elliott was in."

"We heard that much," growled the corporal. "But didn't he step inside?"

"No. And when Elliott came, he backed out of the door."

Joe Ryan glowered. Jerry Webb was standing nearby; and suddenly the policeman grabbed him by a fistful of mackinaw coat and yanked him towards him.

"Spill it!" he barked. "And fast!"

Webb gave a startled grunt and banged at the corporal's clutching fingers. "Keep yer paws off me—" he began.

Joe Ryan shook him like a rat. "Spill it! You musta seen this guy—or wasn't there anyone else but you?"

Jerry Webb cursed, and made another effort to get away. "What d'you mean, nobody else? And what've I got to spill? I come in here, trip over George's body, and the next thing I know some jittery goriller's givin' me the works!"

"You'll get more than the works if you don't come clean!" Joe Ryan promised him. "Somebody slugged George within the last two or three minutes. And right afterwards you barge in."

"So what?" sneered Webb. "I barge in two-three minutes after George gets slugged. But so long as I don't barge in till *after* he gets slugged, what's it all to me?"

Joe Ryan nodded slowly, released the man. "That's it, eh—the alibi? Only you got nobody to back it up."

Jerry Webb gave a mocking grin. "And you got nobody to bust it!"

The policeman's lips tightened; his face reddened. He turned on John Monson again. "You say you never saw this guy properly. Mebbe you didn't, but you saw him some. Was he a white man, or a Nitchie?"

"A white man," Monson told him. "But not this man here—Webb."

"Why not?" barked the corporal.

"He was too tall, and too heavily built."

Joe Ryan gave a grunt. Jerry Webb grinned. To Monson he said, sneeringly, "Thanks, chum. I'll do as much for you some day."

TEN seconds passed. The policeman strode into the living-room, came back with the flashlight he had brought down with him. He went out the kitchen door, sweeping the ground with the flashlight's beam.

He saw blood, from Elliott's crushed skull, but little else. There was a pathway leading from the house to the store, but this was hard-trodden. Moreover, as no snow had fallen for two weeks, the ground was well run-over by the half-dozen huskies that Elliott kept loose around the place.

With Jerry Webb's "alibi" in mind, the corporal started a hunt for a possible murder-weapon. He studied an axe at the woodpile, billets of wood, an ice-chisel near the door, but with all of these he drew a blank. The axe was clean, the billets of wood too light, and the ice-chisel with its five-foot handle too

Suddenly the policeman grabbed Jerry Webb by a fistful of mackinaw and yanked him towards him.

cumbersome. Finally, in disgust, he gave up the search and entered the house again.

The two fishermen, with Webb and Monson, looked at him expectantly. The look irked him.

"You!" he blared at Jerry Webb. "Harness some dogs. I'm hauling him up to the detachment. And all you birds can come along."

With the body loaded, the policeman locked the doors. Later, in the detachment, he typed out statements from each of the men. So far as the fishermen were concerned, this was merely a corroboration of what Joe Ryan himself knew, but in John Monson's case the statement called for more detail.

Monson told of how, with the dipper of water in his hand, he had heard the knock; of dropping the dipper to open the door; of seeing a man—clean-shaven, he looked, tall and bulky—standing there. The man had asked if George Elliott was in; Monson had called the name, and Elliott had answered.

"I noticed that the man moved away from the doorway and that Elliott took a step or two outside; but I'd had my drink so I came back in again."

It was little enough, and the corporal said so. Savagely he pounded out the statement on his typewriter and had Monson sign it. Then he went to work on Jerry Webb.

Webb was cocky and sneering as usual. Joe Ryan had little on him, and Webb knew it. By his story he had been visiting around the village, remembered the poker-party and had come up to the house. Sure he could prove it. He gave the names of two halfbreeds he had visited, and they would supply the approximate time of his leaving them. No, he hadn't met anyone leaving the house, but, cripes, there wasn't only one road from the place!

At length the policeman chased him out, told the others they too could go. But John Monson preferred to remain.

ALONE now, he said to the corporal, "I'm not butting in on your job, but there's one thing you ought to get straight: The man I saw wasn't Jerry Webb. I know," he said, "he got you mad and you'd like to pin something on him; but as I told you before, it wasn't Webb."

The corporal scowled. "Sure. You say he was bigger than Jerry. I heard you."

"And he wasn't dressed like him."

"How?"

"Jerry wears a mackinaw and a cap. This man was wearing a fur-trimmed parka and a cap."

Joe Ryan grunted. "Mebbe now we're getting somewhere. A parka, you say; fur-trimmed parka. What kind of a parka?

"Something white, like canvas."

"And fur-trimmed, eh?" A sudden thrill ran up the corporal's spine. Pete Lewis wore a canvas parka trimmed around the hood with wolverine fur. And Pete Lewis was a big man, and heavy.

"Canvas parka, eh? Trimmed with wolverine?"

"No. With something light."

Joe Ryan's house of cards began to tumble. A light fur could be poor-grade fox. Or wolf. Or even lynx. And parkas trimmed with light-colored fur were fairly common in the village. "That sort of widens the field," he muttered.

But he turned to the typewriter again. This new bit of information that Monson had given looked important. First, though, he spoke to Monson.

"I feel like some of the coffee that George didn't give us? How about brewing some? The pot's on the stove out there and the coffee's on the shelf right above it."

"I'll make it," agreed Monson. "You go ahead with your job."

For some minutes the corporal applied himself to the typewriter. He set out Monson's statement in detail, then suddenly found himself asking a question. "Why didn't he tell me about this guy wearing a parka when I jumped on Jerry in the house? It would have saved a lot of time and put Jerry in the clear. Yeah, why?"

He chewed on his lip and wanted to ask Monson the question. Of course, in the stress of the moment Monson could have overlooked the matter, but if Joe Ryan wanted to be particularly suspicious he could wonder if the whole thing wasn't pretty much of an afterthought. Then again, Monson was positive that the trimming of the parka was not wolverine but some light-colored fur.

"And that's sort of screwy," argued Joe. "One minute he couldn't see this guy 'properly', account of the lamp being turned low; the next, he's all set to swear the fur wasn't wolverine." Joe grunted. "Yeah!" he said to himself, emphatically. "He saw a lot!"

However, Joe went at the typewriter again, only to come to an abrupt stop with one pudgy finger arrested in mid-air.

"Hey, Monson," he called. "About that parka—"

But just at the moment water slopped with a hiss on the stove in the kitchen, and the corporal's question was unheard. Nor was it asked again. Joe Ryan's brow crinkled, and the finger lowered.

So a couple of minutes went by. Ponderous though he was in his movements, Joe's brain could work with incredible rapidity. Now questions and doubts and suspicions crowded into that brain; they were sorted, culled, rejected. After that, Monson called out that the coffee was ready, but he had to call twice, before the corporal heard him.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAN WHO DIED TWICE

THE coffee was good, but for all Joe Ryan knew it could have been soup or dishwater. Meditation held him, though he managed to reply to anything Monson said with a show of interest. At last he stood his cup on the table and fished out his makings.

The detachment faced north. Through the kitchen window the Aurora could be seen blazing in the sky. "We're due for a change of weather," remarked Joe.

He crossed over to the door, opened it, looked out. Monson stood beside him. Now the aurora burst into a frenzy of color and action. It was barbaric in its splendor, lighting the country with a luminous glow. Through it, the headlands and bays of Muskeg Lake showed weirdly; objects a mile away could be distinguished. Joe remarked, "Even shows up that reef off Birch Point."

Then as suddenly as the lights had blazed they sank to a mere phosphorescence in the north.

Back in the living-room, the corporal

Joe gave a grunt, pried the lid loose and shone his flashlight at what the coffin contained.

reached down his buffalo coat and service cap. "You might as well camp here," he told Monson. "You'll never find your way home in the dark."

Monson might have demurred, but Joe Ryan pointed out the spare cot in a corner.

"Sure you'll stay. But how are you? Spooky? Tell you why: I'm going out for a few minutes and you'll be left here with George in the shed. Can you stand it?"

Monson might not have relished the idea, but he would not say so.

"Can, if it's necessary," he answered.

"Sure. Only it gets cold in here when the fire goes down. So chuck on some of that tamarack."

As Monson fired the heater, the corporal picked up his flashlight and went out. He didn't say so, but his destination was the village graveyard.

But first he stopped at a shack nearby wherein a light was still burning. It was burning because its occupants, Nick Stirton and Bill Joy, had not yet gone to bed. His knock summoned them.

Joe greeted them, told them they'd make a pair of fair-to-middlin' ghouls and ordered them to dress and tag along. Nor did he offer any explanation until they were a quarter of a mile from the village and into the graveyard itself.

"We're going to do a spot of resurrecting," he told them then. "Sort of beating Gabriel to the draw." With his flashlight he found a pile of fresh-turned and frozen earth and read the name crudely printed on a rough cross. "Sure; Ike Monson."

Nick Stirton gave an ill-smothered gulp. "Who? Us?"

"Why not? The dirt came out in frozen chunks, and went back in again the same way. And we didn't plant him very deep."

He procured shovels from a nearby shed, but just as his unwilling workers made a start, he stopped them.

"No, by golly! We got the wrong guy It's Bill East I want a peek at."

"Bill East!" exclaimed Stirton.

Then a man tiptoed past, shone his light on the wall, reached up.

"What do you want to look at him for?"

"Never you mind," counseled the policeman. "Root him up."

As Joe had predicted, it wasn't much of a job; but when the coffin was placed on the ground and the corporal began to pry at the lid with a shovel, Nick Stirton backed away.

"He's sort of squeamish," Bill Joy explained.

Joe gave a grunt, pried the lid loose and shone his flashlight at what the coffin contained.

"You see?" Joe told his companion. "Sooner or later we all turn to dust. But this guy made good time."

It seemed so; for in place of Bill East, the coffin held a heavy layer of sand.

THEY headed back for the village; and the first place they came to was the Police detachment. Monson appeared to be up, for the light was still burning.

"I'm going in here for a minute," Joe said. "You fellers wait."

Monson was sitting in a rocking-chair, his hands grasping the arms. The light of the lamp shone on his glasses, but to the corporal he seemed under a strain.

"You're back, eh?" he observed.

"Just for a minute," said Joe. Fancifully, he added, "Going across the bay to Birch Point. Want to see a feller there."

He slipped four new cells into his flashlight, went out and joined the other two men.

They followed him away from the detachment, and he told them he was going up to George Elliott's. They appeared interested and said they would like to go along.

"O.K." said Joe. "Only this job won't be the fun the other one was."

At Elliott's house they went in, and Joe locked the door behind him. He led the way to the kitchen, and cautioned the other two against making any noise. There he began a scrutiny of several objects. These were a trapping-hatchet in the wood-box, a meat-cleaver on the wall, a hammer, a poker, and an old-fashioned brass candlestick. But none of these met with his satisfaction, and not until he found an Indian fleshing-tool on the wall nearest the door did the puzzled scowl leave his face. Then he focused his beam on it and looked closer.

The fleshing-tool was an implement to remove excess fat and the meat from green pelts. Originally it had been the shank-bone of a moose. Now, with the marrow cleaned out, sawn diagonally across and its chisel-edge serrated and sharpened, it was a steel-hard and heavy tool, ideal for the purpose desired. Its upper end was big and knobby, the socket-joint of the knee, and through this knob a moose-hide thong had been tied in a loop. In practice, the user would slip the loop over his wrist, grasp the tool midway of its length, and chop down with the chisel edge, removing the fat and flesh as he went.

All very well; and doubtless George Elliott, who did a bit of trapping on the side, had used the thing for the purpose intended. But if the smear of blood in a crevice and the grayish matter embedded in the thong-hole was from a fur-bearer, George Elliott had done some fleshing only an hour or so before. And Joe doubted it.

So now, holding the tool in his gloved

fingers, the corporal twisted it around as it hung from its nail on the wall. And then he saw something else—several hairs, black hairs, mixed with the grayish matter and the blood.

Joe Ryan almost chuckled—till he heard a faint clicking sound that made him snap out the light and back hastily away. The sound came from the front doorway. It was as though someone were trying the lock.

He waited, edged over to where Stirton and Joy were standing.

Now came another sound, the sound of a window being slid up. Joe realized how weak his precautions against entry had been; then he heard a slight bump, caught the spray of a flashlight, and knew that footsteps were crossing the floor.

Now the beam of the light shone full into the kitchen, but on that side of the door where the fleshing-tool was hanging. Joe heard the pounding of his own heart and prayed that Stirton and Joy would have sense enough to keep still.

Then a man tiptoed past, shone his light on the wall, reached up.

Joe's light went on, too.

"O.K., Ike!" he barked. "Hold it!"

IKE MONSON, the John Monson of the earlier evening, wheeled around. He wasn't wearing his glasses, and in that swift second, Joe Ryan realized what a disturbing difference a pair of plain-lensed glasses could make. But if Ike Monson wasn't wearing glasses, he was wearing something else—and Joe Ryan read the signs.

He dropped the flash, drove in, grabbed Monson around the body and with him thudded to the floor. Monson had managed to draw a gun, and Joe knew it. He knew it by the feel of its metallic substance between his body and Monson's.

He hugged the man tightly, grabbed him by the wrist. If the gun ever got loose. . .!

Monson's breath was hot on his neck, and Monson's strength seemed the equal of his own. He yelled for a light, and heard Bill Joy cursing because he couldn't find it.

Suddenly Monson gave a heave. Joe grabbed him again; then a dull, muffled report rang out. Monson went limp beneath him.

Joe Ryan clambered up. "Shot himself—shot himself trying to get me!" Then, "Where's that cursed light?"

Nick Stirton found it, pressed the button. Monson was flat on his back, a great hole gaping in his head and blood streaming from a smaller hole under his chin. By his side lay a heavy police .45, apparently stolen from Joe's detachment.

"Gods o' War!" yelped Joe. "Light the lamp!"

Lighting the lamp only added to the horror. Things had happened so swiftly.

Asthma Mucus Loosened While You Sleep

Say Thousands of Sufferers

Do recurring attacks of Bronchial Asthma make you choke, strangle and gasp for breath? Are you bothered so bad some nights that you can't sleep? Do you cough and cough trying to raise thick strangling mucus, and strain so hard you fear rupture? Are some attacks so bad you feel weak, unable to work? Are you afraid of colds, exposure and certain foods?

No matter how long you have suffered or what you have tried, we believe there is good news and palliative hope for you in a splendid medicine which was originally a doctor's prescription but that is now available to sufferers at all drug stores under the name of Mendaco.

Mendaco usually works very rapidly because it contains ingredients intended to help nature loosen thick, strangling excess mucus. And you know from your own experience if you can just raise that strangling phlegm you can sleep well, breathe deeply of God's fresh air and not feel like there was an iron band around your chest crushing out your very life.

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Mendaco is not a dope, smoke, injection or spray, but is in pleasant, tasteless tablets. Formula on every package. In fact Mendaco has proved such a great palliative success for thousands suffering recurring choking, strangling symptoms of Bronchial Asthma that an iron clad guarantee insures an immediate refund of your money on return of empty package unless you are completely satisfied. Under this money back guarantee you have everything to gain and nothing to lose, so ask your druggist for Mendaco today and put it to the test. Only 60c.

Mendaco

so dramatically that the two fishermen seemed unnerved. Joe Ryan wiped sweat from his forehead and shed his gloves.

"Right now," he remarked, "I need a smoke."

But before his cigarette was tailored there came another interruption. Jerry Webb edged fearfully into the room.

"Heard somethin'," stammered Jerry. "From out there in the shack."

Joe Ryan was regaining his composure. He looked at Webb.

"Oh, you heard something, did you? Well! And we're ready to hear something, too. Suppose you start?"

Jerry Webb blinked. "Start what?"

"Talking. And you want to be good at it, boy!"

Webb edged around a bit, caught sight of the hole in Monson's skull. He squawked, backed away.

"Not nice to come home to, is he?" suggested Joe Ryan. "You're looking at a lad who died twice—once in a cabin on Greenwater Lake, and once right here. If he'd lived, we'd have hung him. Now we can't hang him, but we can sure hang you."

Jerry Webb's rattish features seemed to twist with fright.

"You can't hang me!" he whined. "I never killed nobody! All I did was to haul Bill East out to the cabin with Ike, shove him in the cabin and burn it up."

"I know," said Joe. "And after that, nicely shaven, Ike lit out for Macey on the Hudson Bay Railway on his skis. But what's the rest of it? What about the will?"

"The will?" Jerry Webb blinked. "Oh, yeah, the will. Ike fixed that up with George Elliott the night Bill East died."

Joe Ryan waited, ground his jaws. "I'll give you about ten seconds to turn it on, or I'll slam you in the hoosegow on an accessory-to-murder rap!"

Jerry Webb gulped. "What do'you want t' know?" he bleated.

"Everything. Right from the time Bill East died."

Webb turned it on. "Ike come into the post the night that Bill died and while I was makin' the coffin. Seems he'd been tryin' to figure out a way to get his insurance-money because he couldn't pay for it any more. He was all set to go, and when he heard about Bill dyin', he said that was just what he wanted. So him and George doped it out: They'd fix it to look as though he'd died in his cabin by switchin' Bill East, and then him and George'd split the eight thousand between them."

"But how about his brother?" asked Joe Ryan.

"He never had no brother. That was part of the game."

JERRY WEBB went on to say that the photograph in the box in Elliott's safe was a photograph of Ike Monson himself. It had been taken some years earlier, before Ike got fired from the railway.

"Then I guess George double-crossed him. Ike come in here the other day to collect, and George given him the laugh. 'Try and get it!' George said. " 'And go to the pen for tryin'!' "

The corporal nodded. "George ran a bluff, and made it stick. To a point, anyway. But Ike—he'd got his nerve coming back."

"Oh, he said he was safe enough," Jerry Webb stated. "You'd only seen him a couple times, a year ago. And him wearin' whiskers, and dressed tough-lookin' up here, you wouldn't rec'nize him anyways. 'Specially if he wore glasses."

"I see," said Joe. He pondered. "And the note on the stick, those tracks to the rabbit-snares?"

"We made them," nodded Webb. "But there ain't no crime in that!"

But Joe didn't seem to have heard him. Musingly he said, "And the rest of it. . .? Ike decided that if he couldn't get his share of the insurance-money, George wouldn't get it either. So he made up his mind to kill him." He turned to the two fishermen. "Remember the Indian calling at the detachment for George the first night we played? That gave Ike his idea. So the next day he goes down to George's, looks around, and spots this flesher on the kitchen wall. If he could get in the kitchen for a drink while the game was on, make a play that someone else was there looking for George and get George to come out too, he could bump George off with the flesher and never be suspected. That," said Joe, unctiously, "was what he *thought*."

"But what fooled him?" asked Joy.

"What? I'll tell you." Joe Ryan became expansive. "He made one little slip: He told me the fur on this imaginary parka wasn't wolverine. Now how the devil could a guy from down East some place, and a railroader at that, know what wolverine looked like? Wolverine is sort of uncommon; but when I asked him if it was wolverine, he said no right away. To make it worse, he said the feller was wearing some 'light-colored' fur.

"I darn near asked him how he knew so much; but just by luck he didn't hear me. Then I put the question to myself—and something hit me between the eyes. He wasn't a railroader from down East at all. So who was he?

"When I got wise to him I set him a couple of little traps. The Northern Lights were pretty good this evening. I went to the door with him and mentioned that you could even see the reef off Birch Point. Without a moment's hesitation he looked that way. Sure he'd look that way! Coming in from Greenwater Lake in the summer with canoe-and-motor, a man has to steer clear of the reef or he'll pile up. And Ike Monson knew where it was."

So far the corporal had not lighted his cigarette. He did so now; and Nick Stirton asked him, "Two little traps, you said. What was the other?"

"The other? Yeah. Just before I left the detachment this evening I told him the place got cold so he'd better fire up with some tamarack. I had mostly spruce in the box, but what happens? Our railroader doesn't have any trouble in picking out the tamarack from the spruce that looked like it. He grabbed the tamarack right away."

Some time later they left. Ike Monson was covered with a sheet, but left to lie where he fell. Jerry Webb had been sped homeward again, with a caution that if he gave good evidence at the inquest, nothing much might be worked against him.

The night was star-studded, calm, and cold. Suddenly, a dog moaned in the village. Another followed. Instantly the wolfish serenade was on.

"Reminds me of the night Bill East died," Joe Ryan told his companions. "Only it was a passing toboggan that started them then. A toboggan, I think, that was hauling the body of Bill East out to Greenwater Lake."

"That's another thing," remarked Nick Stirton. "We left that grave open—the grave that's supposed to be Bill East's. Shouldn't we fill it in?"

"Fill it in?" grinned the corporal. "Why? Bill East's in his grave but Ike needs planting. All we got to do now is to switch the crosses—and everything's hunky-dory!"

GRAY AS IN APPLE

BY CHRISTIAN FOLKARD

ILLUSTRATED BY CARL PFEUFER

Chips put his rifle to his shoulder and aimed carefully at the center of the Jap flag.

THE day after Chips Raffles shot the four Japanese tree-snipers he was sent for by the battalion's commander. They both looked a little uneasy—the colonel because the whole scene lacked military trappings, Chips because he wasn't sure what to say. Also, Chips had managed to scrounge a clean shirt and shorts while the colonel's were streaked with mud and sweat.

"Ha, Rafferty," said the colonel.

"Ha, sir," said Chips, unconsciously aping the tall man. The colonel was schoolmasterish, friendly, but very worried by the progress of the battle for Sanananda Point. He was dressed as a private—no insignia of rank, no peaked cap, no revolver at hip. That was the dress for Australian officers at the front. The Jap snipers doubtless prayed for young men with small mustaches, pips, map-cases and a large importance.

The atmosphere became no easier when a sergeant ploughed across the little clearing of mud, stood to attention before Chips and said: "The Brigadier sent these, sir."

Chips coughed and said, "That is the colonel," and the colonel hrrrumphed, took the papers and tried to rub some mud from the front of his shirt.

"That's New Guinea for you," the colonel mumbled. "I always said, 'Take away an officer's pips and nobody cares, anyhow.'" He swung his head around. "Rafferty, I—"

"Raffles, sir."

"Ah, Raffles. I wish to offer congratulations on your excellent marksmanship. That's the stuff we want."

"Thank you, sir."

"Never call your officers 'sir' within the possible hearing of the enemy, Raffles. And don't salute them in the open. Lost too many good men that way."

The colonel actually chuckled. "I remember down at Milne Bay," he said. "One of our sergeants realized how important this was. He saw an officer—Lieutenant Jones, it was—walking into a dangerous position and yelled out—'Yey-hey! Come back here, you stupid cow!'"

Chips laughed. He knew the sergeant hadn't called "stupid cow" but a string of much stronger Australianisms, most of which started with B.

"They inform me that you've shot nineteen Japs so far."

"Eighteen," Chips corrected gravely. "I'm afraid one got away."

"One got away," repeated Lieut. Col. Barcombe. "I like that. Almost as good as Major Wilkes, RAA. He was o-pipping for the mountain guns against the Japs and sent through this priceless report—'Five of the enemy last seen standing by exploding shell.' Ha-ha. Very good, I thought."

"Yes," said Chips, obediently.

"So you've shot nineteen—no, eighteen—Japs? Jolly good." It was very obvious the colonel was thinking of more things than Chips and his gun. The battle for Sanananda was proving just as difficult, if not more, as the attack on Cape Endaiadere and the capture of Giropa Point. For example, tanks could not be used along the narrow road.

He said to two soldiers lying in the mud, surrounded by field telephones and wires, "Can't you get Brigade headquarters? Hell, what a place! What a place! How do they expect a man to fight a war under these conditions?"

Half to Chips, half to himself, he went on, "Nothing like this in the last war. Almost civilized by comparison. And a civilized enemy. But the Japs—they're just animals, that's all. Don't know the first meaning of decency. Fight, live and behave like animals."

He wiped the sweat from his brow and from under his chin. The sun sat solidly in the small clearing, drawing moisture from the swamp in nauseating waves, the real jungle miasmas. Trees dripped with moss and lianas and the heavy undergrowth crouched thick. No breeze, bird or animal shook the brooding calm.

"If we can't get headquarters, I'll just have to go ahead, that's all." He stared down at the men fixing the phones. "What were you in private life, Raffles?"

"ON the land, sir. I used to do a lot of shooting—rabbits, turkeys and kangaroos. It was was just that I could always see better than the others. You know, Colonel, pick out a brush turkey from the scrub while the others were still looking. I guess it was just a gift."

"Some people have that gift," the colonel said. "One man in a platoon can generally pick out a Jap before the rest. Oh, Hillier!"

Chips knew Lieutenant Bob Hillier, the commander of B company. He had a lot of guts. He sloshed across the open space, his green uniform mud-spattered. "I just checked up," he said. "My men

are all set for the job, but we'd like a couple more Brens."

"That's all right. I can't get BHQ. We'll go ahead."

Chips thought: "B company's got something special. That's why the old boy is so concerned.

"If you don't stop doing that sort of thing, you'll be copping an MC or something," Hillier said to Chips. "Half your luck. Some of the time, I can't even see them. What's the secret—anti-Jap spectacles?"

To the colonel, he said: "Two patrols I sent out this morning both reckon it's the Jap Command Post. They saw a lot of blokes looking like officers. Swords, braid and all."

For Lieut. Col. George Barcombe, it was just another job. Chips had a wholesome respect for infantry officers. They had to remain right where it was hottest and look the coolest. "Hrrrumph!" said the colonel. "I'll come with you. Raffles! Eh, Raffles! See my batman and get my rifle!"

Private Chips Raffles knew the excuse for his presence had gone. As he stepped away, Bob Hillier said: "I've told my men to expect some tough opposition. It's sure to be hot." And the colonel, in a pooh-pooh tone, replied, "The hell with it! What do you want—tiddlywinks?"

Batman Bill Smith and two companions were drinking hot, green tea from pannikins. They were naked, except for shorts and shoes, skins blackened by months under the tropic sun. They all had the long, humorous Australian faces caricaturists thrive on.

They bantered Chips, read imaginary citations for bravery from imaginary newspapers. "The Hero of Sanananda." "To what do you ascribe your amazing powers of marksmanship, Private Raffles?" And a grinning, "His mother, a shy woman, said her son first fired a rifle at two months."

"Aw," said Chips.

The colonel's quarters were a groundsheet held by a sapling between two forked sticks, the roof only eighteen inches from another groundsheet laid on the muddy ground. A mosquito net, an extra pair of boots, a knapsack for a pillow, a small shaving mirror and a ragged mapcase.

When he got back with the gun, the colonel and Hillier had gone. A sergeant called: "Maybe a week off would have been enough to get that rifle? Don't bother hurrying yourself, ple-ease! So you weren't back and I had to get the colonel another rifle, see! But you'd better take his pet along. Go on—that way!"

He was very much the pattern of a model sergeant major. Chips followed the directive of the pointing hand to a narrow track, whipped by many feet into pools of mud and water, that snaked into the jungle. Overhead sisshed the passing twenty-five pounders, fired from Ango, obviously a preliminary barrage for the attack on the Command Post.

"That way" were the Japs. Jeez, what a campaign of death, fever, sweat and mud. Men staggering out of the lines with wounds or malarial temperatures of one hundred and four and above. Typhus from mokka ticks that burrowed under the skin and laid their eggs, and the constant irritation. Tropic ulcers that ate away flesh and skin that would not again grow. Sleeping in foxholes that filled during the night, up to your neck, and skin peeling from feet never dry. Unseen men in the trees, unseen men sniping. Unseen yellow men behind logs and pillboxes, machine-gun posts almost stumbled over before they were sighted or holding their fire until you were only a few yards off. . . .

UNCONSCIOUSLY, almost, Chips slipped the five bullets from the colonel's rifle, wiped each one with an oily rag and clipped them back. Just as he had done that last day, toiling up the ranges of the Upper Clarence, through jungled undergrowth almost as thick as this. He could picture the paspalum waving down to the water's edge. Five feet high, now, his mother had written. The tung trees had dropped their first nuts. . . . Mary was fine, just like a daughter to her.

Chips cracked his brown face into a smile. That was fine, talking of Mary like that, because it had always been his wish. He could see her so clearly now,

it almost hurt. There was poetry in her and she moved light as a falling feather.

Stepping behind, tanned face flushed darker by the climb, the green eyes brighter and the corn hair crazy, was always Mary, long in the legs, narrow in the hips. "All long limbs and God bless you," his father called her.

And on that day she had cried—"Look! Chips, look! An eagle!" and Chips, though he hadn't seen it, grumbled—"I know, I know."

He brought it down with one shot. It plummeted and crashed into the bush. Chips was proud of that shot. An eagle on the wing! But Mary stood very silent. He looked down and saw the green eyes clouded. The lips were a little down at the corners, too.

He stared at her eyes, because there was something in them he could not quite understand. Then she asked quietly, "When do you see the Air Force?"

"Monday," he said. "You're coming with me into Grafton, aren't you? Why, we can—"

"Why, of course," she said. "Yes, of course I'll come with you. Oh, Chips . . ."

Now, what did it mean when a woman had that tone in her voice? He was trying to puzzle it out when he caught sight of a bower-bird dancing before its mound of leaves, mincing and pirouetting. He pointed it out to Mary but she had to peer hard with her sharp eyes before it separated itself from the sympathetic surroundings.

"Lord," she said. "How on earth do you see those things? Do you know what Dad says? Dad calls you Eagle Eyes. It's not very original. But he reckons you can see animals and bush birds twice as fast as anyone else. But I still saw the eagle first."

Chips said: "That's what they want in a pilot—good eyesight."

Even though they had grown up together, he still wanted to impress Mary with his prowess. Sure, he knew his keen eyes were famous all over a district, sharper even than those of the aborigines who lived by stalking prey.

But the Air Force doctor, at the eye-test in Grafton, said, "Sorry, young fellow, but we can't have you as a pilot. Did you know you were color-blind?"

Chips couldn't take the news for a few seconds. At first he thought the doctor was joking. "But I can see any damn thing anywhere," he said. "Look, anybody'll tell you that. We used to have hunting contests. I won every one. Why—why, they call me Eagle Eyes."

"Sorry. But you can get into a ground crew."

"I don't want to stay on the ground. I want to fly." He pointed out of the window, across the river to a clump of trees. "There's a man walking there. Can you see him?"

The doctor peered and shook his head. "I can't," he said. "I don't doubt you've got good eyesight, young man, but you're color-blind. That's that. Of course, if you want a board—"

"I don't want anything," said Chips, and grabbed his hat. At the door he asked, "Is there anything I can do for it?"

"Trouble is, you're red color-blind," the doctor said, sententiously. "That outs you for flying. But it probably gives you an advantage over others in, say, separating greens or picking out another color against a green background."

"That's all I wanted to know, thank you," said Chips. He had been thinking quickly.

MARY, nervous as a bird, was waiting for him. She kept clasping and unclasping her hands. When he came up, they fluttered to her throat.

"Oh," she cried. "They—they won't have you?"

Chips wanted to swear. "Me! He says my eyesight's no good. I'm color-blind. Red color-blind. 'Not for flying,' he said. Oh, no. 'Not for flying.' But a ground-crew. Oh, yes. I can get into that!"

She cried—"Oh, I'm glad, Chips, I'm glad.

He stared hard. "But you wanted—"

"I did. Perhaps I did. I did, until—Do you know what it was, Chips? It was that eagle you shot. When I saw it coming down, I thought it might be you. Don't say I'm silly. I just thought that. When I shut my eyes at night, the plane was that eagle and you were inside. I dreamt about it."

He just said, because he had never seen her look like this before, "Don't be a bunny," and held her hand close.

They drove home slowly, through the clumps of blazing wattle September had painted and the green of a rich Spring. Mary perched on the seat, still nervously happy. He thought maybe he'd never seen her looking prettier, except maybe when they went swimming together. Far was the long-legged imp who'd thrown corncobs at him and put freshwater yabbies in his shoes.

"Chips—I'm so glad it's off your mind. You can do so much now."

"I'm not staying home, Mary," he said. "I'll join the AIF."

And she said, in little more than a whisper, "I knew. I knew. I suppose I knew it all the time, Chips."

"It won't be for long," he said, stolidly optimistic. "We'll soon clean the Japs out. But you'll wait, won't you?"

"No," she said. "I won't wait. That would be silly. If you want me, you'll have to marry me now. Oh, Chips, what a silly proposal!"

All that came back to Chips as he trudged along the track, slipping and sloshing through the mud, the colonel's rifle loose in his right hand. The red color-blindness was a gift more precious than pure bravery or physique in the battle for New Guinea. It had first shown itself when he saw a Jap's brown-yellow face standing almost stark from the green. He fired and the other men had not seen his target until they came on the corpse.

Around Bird's Nest Tree had been his first hunting. That was on the right of the track that led to Sanananda Point, the Japs' last stronghold after Gona and Buna. It was just a clearing in the swamp-jungle, little more than fifty yards square. The Australians had pushed up and squatted there.

The enemy had a strongpost under the tree. They swept the area with machine-guns, sniped, grenaded at night. It was a treacherous hell. Men getting their tucker were shot. Whipcrack of a bullet from an unseen sniper or the steady clopclopclop of the Jap woodpecker. No fires, no hot food, no cigarettes because the damp match-heads flew off. And at night, fully-clothed in the bottom of a foxhole that grew full with water from the cascading rain. An overpowering feeling of being isolated, dumped in the jungle and left to rot. None spoke above a whisper and the grown-gray faces were lined and worn with the weeks of war.

CHIPS came here. He had carefully oiled every bullet in his pouch, filled his rifle-sights and asked if he could go out alone. The sergeant said, "If you're sick of life, you've come to the right place."

He crept through the jungle, just as if stalking wallabies, until he could hear the Japs laughing and jabbering like caged monkeys. He stuck leaves in the hessian around his steel helmet, a small branch between his teeth, rested his rifle barrel in a notched stick and knelt easily on a log.

He shot a Jap who came out of his hole to shake a groundsheet. He shot another who poked his head up to find out what was happening. He saw yellow faces against the green of the trees and shot them, too. Nobody saw him, not even the Australian patrols who passed close on their way out and closer on their way back. He was a silent part of the jungle.

In this life, Chips felt strangely elated and not in the least excited. The Australian bush had taught him patience and he knew he would not miss once he saw his target. He kept very still, because he knew that most men saw only movement.

At dusk, he crept back, ate and slept and was out by dawn. After three days, the Japs quit the trees and started digging communication trenches and were afraid to show themselves. Those who did tumbled and rolled in the mud and squealed like pigs before they died.

The scared brown men fired back at the origin but Chips stayed firm, thinking of Mary and the springboard he'd built on the edge of the Clarence and the Air Force doctor who said he couldn't fly.

The company commander said—"You'll get a decoration out of this, but for God's sake don't make it a posthumous one," and Chips replied—"I'd like one. I'd like the Military Cross."

The firing ahead had been going on for ten minutes, ever since the barrage ceased. B Company was attacking. Chips heard the crack of rifles, the solid thuds of bursting grenades, the bark of tommy-guns and the steady chatter of Brens.

He could picture the infantrymen, not crouching, but standing upright as they advanced, firing from the hip and swearing. Something clenched in the pit of his stomach as he visualised the scene. God, those men were brave. Keeping on your feet was the only way. If you dropped to the ground, the snipers got you and nothing was won and it had to be done all over again. That was why the Australians always got there. They stood upright and walked.

The shooting ceased suddenly and when Chips got near the Jap command post he saw Colonel Barcombe, Hillier and a group of soldiers. To the right of them, in front of a bunker, a dozen or so Japanese were sprawled in grotesque death, some still twitching. But there was one alive—a short, fat, bow-legged man. He stood there, a sword in one hand, a flag in the other, moon-face with wide teeth and black mustache.

CHIPS knew instinctively that this was the commander and he was being called on to surrender. Only afterward did he fully appreciate the drama of the picture, but now he was staring at the Jap flag draped over the officer's fist.

He knew the counterpiece was a red circle, but he couldn't make out the color. He stared at it very hard and it fascinated him. He knew it should be tomato-red, but it looked gray.

Mary had stood with two linen towels hanging from her outstretched hands. "I've got an apple in one," she singsonged. "Bet you can't guess which!"

Why on earth was he thinking of that? It had happened when they were kids.

"Guess which," Mary had said, laughing. "Come on! 'Fraidy-cat!"

The red flag of Japan was gray now.

Chips could not take his eyes from it. He put the rifle to his shoulder, aimed carefully at the center of the flag, where the officer's fist showed, and fired.

He thought he saw the colonel and Hillier start and then jerk back as the grenade the Jap was holding exploded and spun the yellow body like a top.

"The brown bastard," Hillier swore. "He had a grenade under the flag. One of our grenades, with the pin out. Did you notice his lips? He was counting. One—two—Jeez! He'd have thrown it the next second!"

The colonel was wiping the sweat from under his chin and around his eyes. "Ha, Raffles," he said. "Damn long time coming with my rifle, eh? Damn good thing you arrived when you did."

He hrrrumphed a couple of times and said, "That makes the nineteenth, doesn't it? Well, well. I don't know what to say. But you must come with me to the Brigadier."

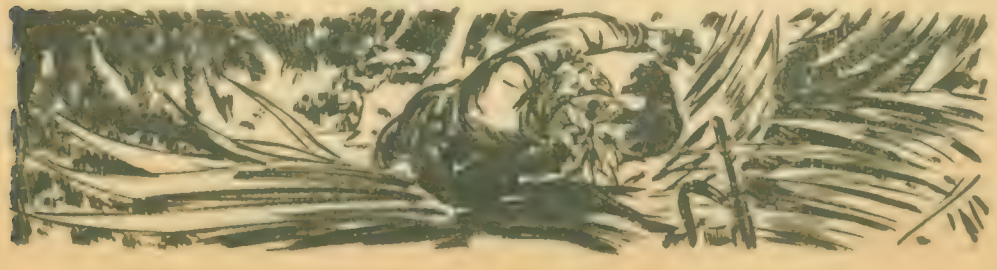
Hillier brought the flag and the sword.

He said, "You'd better keep these as souvenirs. Look—right through the center of the tomato."

"It looked gray to me," Chips said simply. "That's why I couldn't get into the air force. Reds look gray. I knew it was red, but it looked gray. That kept me staring at it. Then I thought of apples."

"Apples?" repeated the colonel. "Good Lord—apples?"

"You see," said Chips, miles away. "She had one in her left hand. Both hands had red towels over them. But I picked it out because there was a red bulge—or, rather, a gray bulge. And grenades are shaped a bit like apples, aren't they?"



ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL STAHR

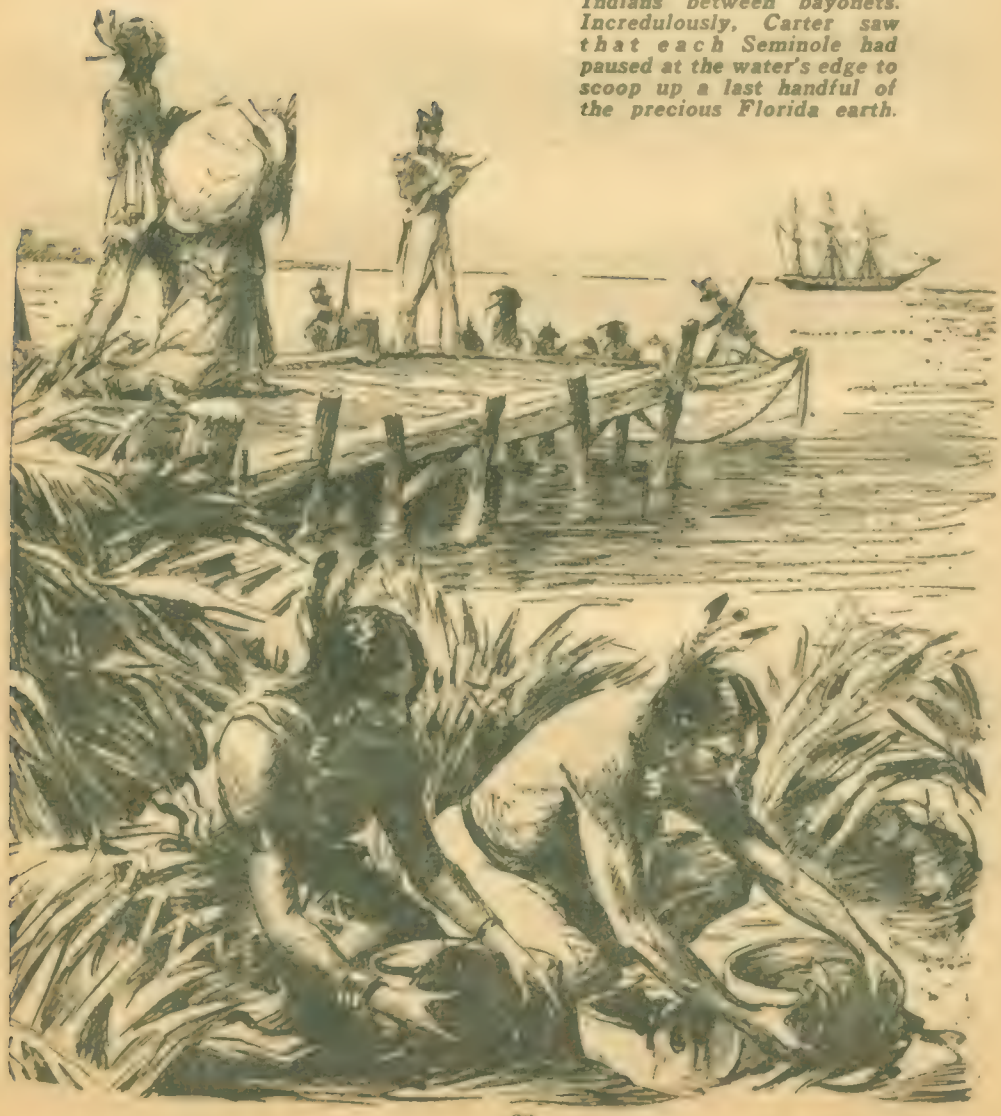
MAY second, Eighteen thirty-nine. Seventh day out from Fort Brooke. Smooth sea, and a following wind. . . . The North Florida coast in sight all morning. Marshy inlets, for the most part, filled with great bursts of wild-fowl. . . . At noon, we rounded Point de las Ciegas, setting our course North by North-West, for Pensacola Bay, where we are to collect another group of hostiles. . . . At four, we held a burial service, to consign four more bodies to the Gulf: the old chief Olotaraca, his wife, an unnamed infant of same, and a boy named Taholoochee. Dysentery cases all, according to Sgt. Grady. . . . The young chief, Wildcat, still refuses food. Now that Olotaraca is dead, he is regarded as the natural leader. . . . Clear sunset. The damp stench of the land is gone, now that we have dropped the coast behind at last.

BREVET Captain John Carter closed his diary and dimmed the whale-oil lamp that swung lazily on the gimbal overhead. Even with the door thrown wide, the ship's cabin was stuffy; it was a relief to step to the *Dragon's*

A Captain Carter Novelette

RED JUSTICE

BY WILLIAM DU BOIS



The detail marched down to the lighter, shepherding the Indians between bayonets. Incredulously, Carter saw that each Seminole had paused at the water's edge to scoop up a last handful of the precious Florida earth.

gently-rolling deck again, even for a poor sailor. For a long moment, Carter stood at the taff-rail, a tall, spare silhouette against the moonrise: there was a dash about the captain always, a medallion quality peculiar to that young man's century. The definite aura of the veteran—despite the fact that he was jumpy as only a military man can be, after a week on shipboard.

An harassed military man—on whose square shoulders rested the task of transporting two hundred Seminoles from Tampa Bay to the New Barracks at New Orleans.

Carter turned gratefully into the gentle south wind, to fill his lungs with its clean savor. Even now, the mingled odors that rose from the ship's waist were enough to send a man groping queasily for the rail. "Not that it's *their* fault," he told himself swiftly. "The Army can spare neither guards nor bottoms for this wholesale removal of a nation. Therefore, two hundred Seminoles must sleep cheek by jowl in the 'tween decks of one schooner, with their pigs and chickens for company. Living on parched corn and jerky venison—and a fanatic hatred of all things white, despite the treaty that sent them here. Dying at the rate of five a day, with that hate still black in their hearts—"

His knuckles grew white on the rail as he fought down a nausea that had invaded mind as well as body. For two years now, he had met them in their swamps, and fought for his life on equal terms. The concentrated misery of this voyage was another matter. "New Orleans is another corps area, thank Heaven. Perhaps I'll feel clean again, once I've turned them over to the commanding officer at that barracks. At least, someone else will have to shepherd them up the Mississippi to Fort Gibson—and their new hunting ground—"

Then he remembered that he must talk again to the young chief, the Wildcat, before he slept tonight. Somehow, he must be persuaded to break his fast, now that this human freight looked to him for guidance. Carter walked stiff-legged back to the helm, and addressed the mate.

"Is Captain Nichols below, Mr. Day?"

The mate was a flint-thin Yankee who smiled with an effort. He said dourly, "The skipper is in the bilge, Captain Carter. Helping to trim cargo. Shall I send word?"

"Never mind," said Carter. Already, he regretted the impulse. "I thought we might talk to the young chief together. Of course, it's *my* job—"

"That it is indeed, sir. Though if you ask me, the Wildcat's made up his mind to die. And when an Indian sets his mind on death—well, there's nothing in our white world can talk him out of it. I remember our last trip up—with a load of Creeks and Mickasukies—"

Carter returned to the taffrail, ignoring the rest. He had suspected Day of being a blackbirder in his youth; each fresh display of callousness strengthened that suspicion. But Day was only typical of the *Dragon's* skeleton crew, after all. Perhaps that explained his dislike for them—for all but Captain Nichols. Nichols, in his withdrawn, ascetic way, was obviously a breed apart.

Nichols, at least, understood that these Seminoles were not his prisoners, but his Government's wards, now that they had given themselves into the Army's hands . . .

COMPOSED at length, Carter stumped forward to the companionway that led to the waist, returning the crisp salute of his corporal at the 'tween-decks ladder. There were just ten Regulars aboard, beside himself and Sergeant Grady—enough to make sure that all approaches to the ship's waist were guarded, night and day, though the constant seasickness among the Indians had made that precaution seem rather useless, at times. Especially when he remembered that they had not been permitted to bring so much as a knife aboard—when they cowered together for the most part like sick sheep in their sunless pen.

Carter braced himself again at the ladder, and stared up one last time at the clean stars. The *Dragon's* mast swung in a long, sweet arc as the breeze freshened a little, and he saw that the moon had just swum up above the dark

pencil-smudge that was the Florida coast-line, away to the east. A vast yellow balloon floating in a pale mirage of sky, too big to be quite real. Carter held his breath and waited. Sure enough, the low ululation rose up from 'tween decks, the Seminole's welcome to their ancient god. *They'll howl like that for hours now,* he reminded himself savagely. *I wonder how they handled those tribal chants on the old slavers? Probably Day would whip them into silence, if I weren't here to stop him.* He breathed deep, and shouldered his way down the ladder—nodding to the second guard on duty, who picked up a bull's-eye lantern and followed him into the waist.

The Seminoles, for the most part, were lying on straw mats, side-by-side like so many copper sardines. Carter had never learned why they huddled so. Was it through fear, a pure herd instinct in all this strangeness? Actually, they might have been almost comfortable, had they chosen to spread out, with their belongings, among the cargo amidships. . . . He turned aside automatically as a goat bleated in the gloom, and brushed aside an importunate hand that clutched at his coat-tails. Micanopy, the gold-bricker par excellence, begging for a rum-ration to drive out devils. Farther on, he paused to speak consolingly to an expressionless young mother, who sat quiet as a stone, with a sick child asleep in her arms. That child would die tonight, if he were kept longer in this fetid air. Carter made a mental note of the squaw's position against the bulkhead: he would have Grady make another try, persuade her to come aft to the sick-bay. For the present, he could only recoil from the dumb hopelessness in her eyes. No one stirred, as he walked on to the forward ladder. But their eyes were all like the eyes of that squaw. The timeless reproach of the exile. The blankness of ultimate despair. . .

Sergeant Grady was waiting at the forward ladder—a square-rigged man who seemed to radiate fresh air and a fresher viewpoint, even in that fetid hole.

"If you're planning to talk with the Wildcat, sir, I've just seen him—"

"Where is he now?"

"Behind the next bulkhead, sir, on Olotaraca's own mat. I told you he'd take over, when the old fellow cashed in. Believe it or not, he's eating again. What's more, he seems chipper as a lark. If you ask me, he knows he must think for all of them now—"

Carter dropped his voice a peg. After all, if he could skip this chore 'til morning—

"Does he know I'm down here?"

"Does a cat know, sir, when a mouse walks into his parlor?"

"I'm not sure I like that comparison, Grady."

"Consider it withdrawn, sir. But you've bumped heads with 'em for two years, now. You know there's worse things to soldiering than death."

"Thank you, Grady. I discovered that for myself, some time ago."

"Remember how we went into the swamps to bring back Perelli, sir? That was no picnic. And the time we smoked 'em out of the Kissimmee, with nothing but a few matches and our nerve?"

"Are you trying to buck me up, Grady?"

"Not at all, sir. I see that's quite needless—"

They exchanged a quiet smile by the lantern light. As always, Carter felt strength flow out to him from the stocky sergeant. In his way, Grady was a two-fisted symbol, eternal as the first pioneer. A fair sample of a new nation on the march—a nation that could take a detail like Indian removal in its stride.

Grady said slowly, "The Wildcat still wants to go ashore at Boca Blanca. Settle his score with Jumper, man to man. You'll have to talk him out of that tonight, sir—if you can. We pass the Boca tomorrow, you know—"

"Come along," said Carter. "I feel like talking now."

HIS hand closed on the derringer in his side pocket, as he followed the bull's-eye lantern into darkness. But it was only an automatic precaution, now. Grady had given him back his courage; he knew he would see this job through now, come what may.

It had begun on a blazing hot after

noon in Spring—on the long prairie, near Tampa's Fort Brooke. Carter remembered the scene perfectly. Too perfectly for his peace of mind, on the sleepless nights of this voyage.

His company, at full war strength, had drawn up in open order where the wagon-road ended, muskets at the ready. Grady had gone forward a little, at his order, to climb a cabbage palm and sweep the shimmering heat-mirage ahead with his glass. Jumper, the renegade Indian standing at his elbow, had chuckled a bit at that precaution. Jumper had been a glass of fashion that afternoon—a civilian in nankeen trousers, tail-coat, and sleek beaver, his dark oiled hair fresh shorn by the general's own barber.

Jumper had spoken softly, with a perfect Boston accent. "They'll show themselves when they're ready, sir, not before. The old chief is arguing with the Wildcat now, if you ask me—"

"I'm asking you nothing," said Carter crisply. "The fact is, Jumper, I don't see why you marched out here at all. *Your* part in this job was done six months ago."

"True enough, Captain. I only wanted to count heads. To make sure the Wildcat goes North with the others."

Carter turned on his heel, to check the disposition of a field-piece. "I'd make quite sure of that if I were you."

"Do I look frightened, Captain—with an army to protect me? You did right to bring your howitzers. Show them cold steel and thunder—it's better trading goods than all the calico in New England—"

Jumper would have been an anomaly in any century. A hundred years later, history would dismiss him as another red quisling, one of the many traitors who broke the power of the Seminole nation from within. Jumper had been born Tostenuggee, the younger son of Olotaraca, the brother of Chekika, the Wildcat. The tribe of Olotaraca had flourished in the last days of the benign Spanish rule. Inhabiting the prairie of the Ocklawaha, the Indians had lived a tranquil village life, harvesting their crops in peace. Along with the young chiefs Coacoochee and Willy Emathla, the sons of Olotaraca had made ceremonial visits to the *alcalde* in St. Augustine, bearing game and the first fruits of each harvest.

"And what is your part of the bargain?" asked Carter, leaning back against the bulk of the howitzer.

Jumper and Willy Emathla had stayed, to study with the Franciscan fathers. When Emathla had returned to his father's clan on the Okeechobee, Jumper had asked his own father for permission to remain—to learn the white man's language and his ways—to voyage with a Spanish lawyer to Boston after

the American Annexation, where he had read law, worked as a clerk in the State House, and learned the polka and the waltz.

Jumper was a part of the white world when Osceola had preached war above the first council fire. At the time of Dade's massacre, he was back in St. Augustine, as an adviser on the general's staff. Jesup had sent him into the scrub as an unofficial ambassador, to engineer the first truce. When that truce was broken by Coacoochee and Emathla, Jumper had been able to keep the tribe of Olotaraca neutral. Despite the Wildcat's ragings, he had persuaded his father's braves to stay quietly in their village, while Jesup defeated Coacoochee at Pease's Creek, and smoked Emathla from the Kissimmee, to lock him, once and for all, into the Big Cypress.

Had Olotaraca stood beside Coacoochee at Pease's Creek, the battle might have gone another way; had he joined Emathla on the Kissimmee, he might well have sent Jesup and Worth reeling back on Tampa. The great hopes of victory were over, now. Osceola had died of a broken heart in Charleston; Coacoochee was a prisoner in the Spanish fort at St. Augustine; Olotaraca could not protest when the Army now dispossessed him of his fine lands and forced him south into the ragged skirts of the Everglades.

Only the zealots among the younger chiefs had hopes of continuing the war now. Jumper, and others of his ilk, had done their work too well, splitting the tribal units that Osceola had all but forged into a nation, dividing the minds of chiefs grown fat under the Spanish rule. Already it was evident that the ruthless process of Indian removal, which Washington had already used so effectively to break the resistance of Creek and Cherokee, would operate among the Seminoles as well.

A WEEK earlier, Jumper had met his father in the scrub, with a strong Army escort, to talk terms. For Olotaraca, the choice was simple: slow starvation for his people in the swamps, or a forced march to Tampa Bay, where Government transport was waiting. Osceola had preached war to the death, rather than submission to removal to the Arkansas, and the younger chiefs were still of Osceola's mind. But Olotaraca had listened to Jumper; like Bowlegs and Little Cloud, his spirit was broken. He had promised to bring his tribe to Long Prairie, to march peaceably into Fort Brooke. . .

"And what is your part of the bargain?" asked Carter, leaning back against the sizzling bulk of the howitzer, hating himself for the question.

Jumper answered readily, his time-server's smile intact in his handsome copper mask. "Citizenship, first of all, Captain. Forty acres of homestead on Boca Blanca Bay—which, as you know, is a most attractive spot on the Gulf, a safe five hundred miles north of here. Finally, the general himself has promised me five silver dollars for every buck that marches into your lines today. That's why I came out from the Fort—to count heads—"

He let the rest ride, as Grady whooped from the cabbage palm. Carter snapped to attention and barked an order to his pickets. Across the prairie, the first plumed turban had just flashed among the thick scrub beyond. The Seminoles emerged in single file, led by Olotaraca and his sense-bearers. The bucks first, in a proud row, their muskets cradled in their arms. Then the squaws, bent double under their household load. A few crones brought up the rear, leading the livestock—a dozen starved cows, a goat or two, even a fighting cock on a rawhide thong.

When Carter turned to march over to the post of command, he saw, with a wry smile, that Jumper had vanished into thin air at the appearance of his tribesmen.

No one stirred as the hostiles marched between the company ranks, to drop their muskets at Carter's feet. A faint murmur of approval went up when the young captain stepped forward to strike palms with the old chief. Chekika, the Wildcat, stood on his father's right—his arms folded, his eyes like hooded lightning. *Would the sky fall if I offered him my hand too?* Carter wondered. He took

a tentative step forward, stopped instantly by the young chief's glare.

The Wildcat spoke with dreadful calm. "I have come this far for two reasons, Captain. First, to be present at my father's death—he will not see this journey's end. Second, to kill my brother Tostenuggee, if he dares to meet me face to face. Remember that, before you grant me liberty—" He marched on with the other braves, his head high—indomitable, and eternally proud.

Carter turned again to Olotaraca, and saw, incredulously, that the old man's eyes were brimming with tears. Indians did not weep, in the captain's cosmology. He was still staring when one of the sense-bearers—an aged Negro, whose flat face resembled a heartbroken monkey's—leaped forward to assist the old chief to the head of the patiently waiting column. Then the white captain marked an order; the regulars snapped into marching formation. Throughout the ranks there was an obvious surge of relief, now that they were finishing a job unworthy of soldiers.

CHAPTER II

BROODING HATE

THE general was in a good mood the next afternoon as he smoothed the formal treaty under the sunshade on the parade-ground. Behind him, the garrison thronged the walls of Fort Brooke, to cheer the departure; at his feet, the sun-bitten apron of grass spread fanwise to the water's edge. Tampa Bay was wide as the sea under the full blaze of afternoon, riffled with whitecaps to the south. Captain Carter bent forward to whisper in the general's ear.

"Couldn't they wait till morning to go aboard, sir? A little rest, after that long march—"

The general snorted—as generals will, the world over, at unwanted advice, particularly when the advice is good. "I've tried that before, sir. I've *wanted* to be humane with these red clowns. D'you know what happened? Dozens of 'em had ghosted through our lines by morning, to starve in the swamp again." His eye swept down to the landing-stage, where Grady stood with a tally-sheet. The Seminoles were drawn up on the dock by boatloads, each group supervised by a corporal's squad. The *Dragon* waited beyond, straining a bit at her cable in the buffet of the wind: even to Carter's landsman's eye, the schooner seemed pitifully small for the freight she must carry. He pointed down the bay, where the side-wheeler *Argus* was getting up steam—a blunt-nosed freighter, with her auxiliary sails already spread to eke out the new-fangled boilers.

"If we'd been assigned that ship, General, I'd guarantee to deliver this cargo in better repair."

The general chuckled. "We're clearing 'em from the Floridas, Carter—that's the main thing. Besides, we need the *Argus* for stores. She's picking up turpentine at Boca Blanca, you know—and dropping a really valuable passenger—" He glanced up to wave at the dapper figure picking his way along the dock—a copper dandy in tail-coat and glossy beaver, preceded by a deferential porter with carpet-bags. Carter held his breath as Jumper walked among his tribesmen, ignoring the low hiss of comment that followed him. And Carter thought bitterly, *He can afford to be cocky now, with the Wildcat already aboard the schooner.*

"Don't let a long passage worry you, Carter," said the general affably. "As you know, they aren't taking so much as a knife aboard, unless it's smuggled. Captain Nichols has made a dozen runs for us; Grady knows how to dispose your men, so there'll be no chance of trouble on shipboard—"

Carter kept his voice carefully toneless. "I'm sure we'll manage, sir."

"Damn it all, Captain, we *have* to manage. That's what this war is about, you know. They agreed to emigrate, every man jack of 'em: we've their chiefs' marks to prove it. I tell you, the Army spent a pretty penny back in '32, transporting a group of 'em to their new hunting ground, just to be sure they approved. . . . Now we must lose men by the hundreds, penning 'em in their swamps, making 'em live up to the bargain. That's Indian morals for you, Cap-

tain; don't try to understand it. Just pen as many of 'em between decks as you can, and take 'em north. Our job is to make the Floridas so safe that a child could walk from coast to coast—" The general realized he had launched into a fair-sized oration, and cut it short. "To your command, Captain, and good luck. Grady will see you through the pinches, you know. Lean on him, when you must—"

Carter marched down to the dock, white but contained. When, he asked himself dourly, will they cease to reproach me with my youth? How many sets of spurs must I win before I can crack their hard-shelled wisdom with my own?

The general accepted Carter's salute, and stood at attention while the detail marched down to the lighter, shepherding the Indians between bayonets. Incredulously, he saw that each of the Seminoles had paused at the water's edge to scoop up a last handful of the Florida earth into a small raffia basket—an identical, stooping gesture, older than time, and just as despairing. . . . *So this is their farewell to their homeland*, he thought. *This is their reward for refusing to abide by the decision of a few venial chiefs.* . . . He raised his head as a steamboat whistle snored down the bay. The *Argus*, with Jumper aboard, was standing out to open water, a comfortable billow of smoke pouring from her tall twin funnels, her paddles thrashing the blue bay as she gathered speed. Carter whipped a spyglass to his eye. He was just in time to see the renegade, his beaver at a saucy angle, as he disappeared into the latticed after-house, an honored guest in a white man's world of cigars, soft beds, and rum punches before the dinner-bell.

Captain Carter followed the last of his captives aboard the lighter, disdaining Grady's proffered hand.

"To my dying day," he said, to no one in particular, "I will not subscribe to this form of justice."

NOW, as he walked down the black waist of the schooner in the lantern's wake, that same doubt gnawed at his heart.

The Wildcat spoke from the darkness. Carter pulled himself together sharply, as the light picked out the familiar copper mask—ageless now, as its owner leaned comfortably against a bulkhead, his legs crossed on the chief's mat, his two wives planted, like set pieces in melodrama, at either elbow.

"It was good of you to come like this, Captain. I was about to ask your Sergeant to send for you."

"Speak, Chekika—"

The Wildcat dipped a hand into a bowl of corn-meal mush proffered by a squaw, and sucked his fingers dry. "The whites are always efficient. I would test your efficiency tonight, Captain—now that my father is gone—now that the chief's mat is mine. Tomorrow, this schooner must pass within a league of the Point de Los Angeles—and Boca Blanca. Will you set me ashore, that I may visit my brother?"

Watching him narrowly, Carter thought, *He's cool as a deacon in church. Squatting on the very spot where his father breathed his last this afternoon. Eating away, as though he hadn't a sorrow in the world. Maybe the general was right, after all. Maybe I'm wasting my time trying to understand them—or their sense of honor.*

Aloud, he said, "You must know that what you ask is impossible."

"The captain could heave to, just off the point. You see, I have studied maps too, Captain Carter. I would be back in a half-hour, with his scalp. Is it too much to ask?"

Carter said patiently, "You are going to a reservation, Chekika, where all killing is illegal. There you will live under our laws—settle your disputes in our courts."

"The Seminole settles a dispute in just one way, Captain. Surely efficiency means time-saving, in your language? I have sworn to kill my brother for the ruin he has brought upon us. I will return to keep that promise, no matter where you take me—"

Grady stepped into the circle of lantern-light. "Look at me, Wildcat. Is this, by any chance, a threat?"

"Call it that if you like, Sergeant."

"I've put Indians in irons for less than that," said Grady. It was a quiet state-

ment of fact, without show of bitterness.

"Do what you like with me, Sergeant. My plan is made, and I will go ashore tomorrow—through the surf, at the Point of the Angels. Even in irons, I will persuade you to grant me that. Believe me, it will be much simpler if we come to terms now."

Carter heard his own voice cut in, despite his better judgment. "Has grief for your father robbed you of your senses, Chekika?"

"My father is better dead," said the Wildcat. "No man should live on, after his spirit is broken. *My* spirit dies with me, Captain. How often must I convince you of that?"

"Does that mean you'd be willing to die, if you might avenge yourself on—on Jumper?"

"Exactly, Captain. You see, you follow me after all." The Wildcat's eyes were hot sparks in the penumbra of the lantern. "All I ask is a chance to mete out tribal justice to my brother—in my own way. You may try me by *your* laws thereafter. Or shoot me out of hand, if you prefer. As I say, I will return to the ship for your decision. On my word of honor. An Indian's word can be good, you know. Do not judge the tree, because a branch is covered by the moss of greed."

"I'm afraid I must say good night to you, Chekika."

"As you wish, Captain. Just believe me, when I say you'll be sorry later."

"Will you explain that?"

"Only if we strike a bargain."

Grady took a soft step forward. "Shall I persuade him, sir?"

"One does not persuade a chief, Grady." It was not often that Carter could correct his sergeant on a point of Indian etiquette. "One bargains as an equal, or one chooses war. We must abide by the choice of our own chief, in Washington." But Carter could not go on; he turned away from the cold disdain in the Wildcat's eyes.

"Believe me sir, if they're plotting some devilment here below—" But the captain was already on his way to the ladder that led topside. Grady and the lantern bearer had no choice but to hurry in his wake.

A new figure joined the procession at the companionway amidships. A tall, spare figure in a battered officer's cap, with witch-burning eyes spaced wide in an anchorite's face. Grady lumbered into a ponderous salute, a compliment which Carter had already bestowed, with his best West Point punctilio.

"I heard most of it," said Captain Nichols. "Is that fellow crazy, or am I?"

"Neither, sir," snapped Grady, before Carter could speak. "Take my word for it, the Wildcat is hatching some devilment tonight. If I were running this ship—"

"Speak up, Sergeant," said Nichols, easily. "I was never one to stand on manners."

"If I were you, sir," said Grady, managing somehow to include both captains in the phrase, "I'd have the whole lot of 'em on deck now for a once-over. I'd go through this 'tween-deck space with a fine tooth comb. Knives or no knives, it's my belief they've rigged something in the dark—"

"Why d'you suppose I've been working through the bilge tonight?" asked Nichols. "You can take *my* word for it, Grady, things are clean as a whistle below."

They turned in unison as a step sounded on the ladder. Carter's silhouette loomed above them, a shaky silhouette groping for the rail, and fresh air. Nichols gave his best New England chuckle.

"The captain can stand them at close quarters just so long, eh, Grady? I think this calls for a drink in my cabin. Join us, if you like. Perhaps I can show you how broad-minded I really am."

THE captain's rum was a full-bodied Jamaica, deceptively mild on the palate. Feeling his head clear with the second glass, Carter leaned back in his chair to observe his host at leisure. Nichols did not have the air of a sea-captain, for all his obvious skill in the trade. The skipper's broad brow, his strange, reserved smile, brought back memories of Carter's own youth in Boston. When he had trod the walks of Cambridge briefly, before he had moved on to West Point, to be measured for hero's cloth. . . .

"In a way," said Nichols, "it would be poetic justice to put the red devil ashore tomorrow. Damned if I wouldn't give him his whack at Jumper. If you didn't outrank me in the matter, John—" Nichols turned those fanatic eyes on Carter, full-strength. "May I use your Christian name, now that we're talking like Christians at last?"

"Admitting that an Indian might have a soul—and a sense of justice—"

"That he might even live at peace with us, if we gave him half a chance. The Spaniards managed it, in Florida at least—"

"Come in, Grady," said Carter. "You know this is a free-for-all."

"Since you ask me, gentlemen," said the sergeant, "you both belong in another century." He reached again for the demijohn. "You with your pity, sir—and you, Captain Nichols, with your notion that we could live in the same world with them. Sorry if that sounds brutal. It's facts."

"The eternal pragmatist," said Nichols, and pushed the demijohn toward Carter.

"You didn't learn that word before the mast," murmured Carter.

Nichols smiled wryly. "If you must know, I studied for the ministry at Yale College. Unfortunately, I developed a tendency toward consumption in my youth. My doctors said a sea voyage would kill or cure me. Being poor, I was forced to make that voyage in a fo'c'sle." Nichols helped himself generously to the rum. "I still can't avoid preaching on occasion. Especially when the word 'democracy' shows sign of tarnish."

Carter stirred uneasily. *Of course I must give him an argument, if only for the sake of the colors,* he told himself, with proper military firmness.

"Do you object to the principle of Indian removal, sir?"

"Only on ethical grounds," said Nichols. "Obviously, it's our duty to make Florida safe for real-estate forever. Also, we must free our army at the first possible moment, to get on with our business in Texas, and smash through to the Pacific. Manifest destiny is the slogan for that, gentlemen. You'll be hearing that phrase often, as time goes on—"

"Pardon me, Captain," said Grady. "But what's all this to do with the Wildcat's request for a personal man-hunt?"

"Everything and nothing. I still say we could have lived in peace with the Florida Seminoles, if we'd separated the Indian Agents from the Army—educated them gradually, on their own village council-grounds—paid for their slaves, instead of claiming them with fake sheriff's warrants from Georgia. . . . Take a renegade like Jumper. If he had been kept inside his nation's boundaries, and taught only the facts a primitive mind could grasp— Instead, he was taken bodily into the white man's world—and educated for the trade of a traitor."

Carter was on his feet, feigning an anger he did not quite feel. "Remember there's an Army officer present, sir—"

Nichols emitted his wintry New England chuckle—an odd sound in that heat-drugged cabin. "Your servant, sir. The Jamaican spoke, not I. Of course, the struggle was inevitable, with a hot-head like Osceola to keep the pot boiling—with die-hards like the Wildcat, who'll make religion of their hate 'till doomsday. I still say he should be given his chance ashore tomorrow. When you hate another man as the Wildcat hates his brother—well, it's better to die in hot blood than by inches."

Carter stirred once again, remembering the dark blaze in the Seminole's eyes. "Go on," he said. "Suppose you had full authority—how would you proceed?"

"I'd heave to under Angels' Point in the dawn, and let him swim ashore. Jumper owns a half-developed farm on the curve of the bay, just inside the point. What's more, he's been there since Friday, since he came up on the *Argus* ahead of us—unpacking his loot, preparing to settle down as a model country gentleman, with five slaves and a mule or two. There isn't much doubt that the Wildcat would find his brother at home—alone, save for his niggers. That's the penalty of a renegade, you know. You're shunned by both races, once your work is over—"

Carter cut in easily. "Are you sure you haven't talked this over with Chekika?"

"Word of honor," said Nichols. "The classic pattern has intrigued me, just the same, ever since we hoisted our hook in Tampa Bay—" He glanced up irritably as the mate thrust his hatchet-thin face in at the cabin door. "Well, Mr. Day?"

The mate's voice was calm; only his eyes betrayed his urgency. "Beg pardon, sir, but you're wanted below—all of you. The fact is, part of the cargo's awash—"

"What are you saying, Day?" Nichols had already left the cabin on the run, with Carter and Grady at his heels.

The Seminoles had retired to the dry tops of the cargo goods at last. Carter saw that the Wildcat's wives had already spread his mat snugly atop a huge hogshead.

"Only in the forward bulkhead, sir. If you ask me, someone's sprung a petcock when we weren't lookin'—"

CHAPTER III

RED MAN'S ULTIMATUM

THEY entered the companionway in a rush. Nichols went down the ladder with the agility of a monkey in a cyclone, though Grady was only a step behind. The waist was ankle-deep in water, which bubbled dismally through the seams in the forward bulkhead. Carter's men had snapped into the emergency with perfect discipline; every corner blazed with lantern light as all hands waded amidships to man the emergency

pumps. The Seminoles had retired to the dry tops of the cargo goods at last. Carter saw that the Wildcat's wives had already spread his mat snugly atop a huge hogshead.

For a moment, Carter paused with his mouth open, trying hard to square the scene with reality. The squaws stood impassively, with their government-issued calico tucked above their sturdy knees, leaving the dry spots for the braves. In a corner, a porker squealed shrill protest at the flood. When Grady spoke, it was only a logical overtone to chaos.

"See what I mean, sir? If we'd slept 'em on deck, like I advised, we'd have a dry hull now. This is Chekika's work. Just you let him deny it."

The Wildcat answered calmly, as the schooner rolled in the fat sea, sending the stale brine sloshing about their ankles. "Believe me, Captain Nichols, there's no cause for alarm. The water will rise no higher, unless I give the order. If I may be permitted to bargain promptly with Captain Carter—"

But Nichols had already taken back his authority with a bark. "What's this about orders? From *you?*"

"From me, Captain. Perhaps I should begin by explaining that we had a purpose in chanting each night at moonrise. The sound covered the work of my sense-bearers in the bilge—"

Carter had already crossed the waist like a rampaging bull. "Make your point, Chekika—and make it fast."

"But it is so simple, Captain. Three nights ago, we pried loose a board—under the chief's own mat. That gave us easy access to the bilge—and the pet-cocks. As your mate has observed, we only opened the forward cock a fraction—enough to waterlog the ship a bit. Make sure we don't pass the Boca in the dark—"

"D'you mean to say you're sinking us?"

"Not at all, Captain. The cock was closed again, the moment we heard your step on the stair. You see, not all of my people are as broken-hearted as they seem. Some of them still wish to live—even in an alien land—"

Nichols smashed a fist against the hogshead that served as the Wildcat's impromptu throne. "You're in command here, Carter. Have those fellows dragged out at once. I'll see that they hang promptly enough—"

The Wildcat's voice cut in softly. "You could never reach them in time, Captain Nichols. The planks were tamped down tightly when they went to work tonight. So is the trapdoor amidships. We communicate now by signals—so—"

He rapped twice on the wet planking with his heel. The tapping was answered promptly from the bilge below. A ghostly echo of the sound that sent a cold prickle down Carter's spine.

Nichols' voice was as cool as the Seminole's now. "Do I gather they're standing at the main pet-cocks, amidships?"

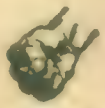
"Exactly, Captain. Two ancient Negro slaves, who served my grandfather without question. If I tap three times on this planking, they will spring both of those main cocks—wide. Your ship will sink to her yards before you can reach them, Captain. . . . Try me, if I'm wrong."

No one stirred for a long moment, as Nichols' eyes raked the waist from end to end. "You mentioned a bargain just now, I believe—?"

"Need I put it in words again?"

Carter cut in quickly. "If you think we'd put you ashore after this—"

"But you've no choice, Captain Carter. Once we've passed the Boca, I'll give the signal to flood us out. Either I swim ashore, or we drown together—"



THERE was a flurry of fists at the ladder. Carter whirled in time to see Day, the mate, go down before Grady's famous sledgehammer right. The sergeant chuckled briefly as he bent to pick up the mate's pistol—and tossed it back to him, when he saw that the percussion lock had fouled in the damp.

"We were close to sinking then, sir," said Grady, easily. "Believe me, an ex-slaver's methods don't work with Indians. Will you take command, Captain?"

Carter turned to Nichols with a gesture of apology. "I'm afraid my sergeant is not quite in order—"

"It's your war, Captain," said Nichols. "And your prisoners. Make your decision."

"What would happen if we foundered now?"

"We're fourteen miles off the coast, Captain. Not even a New Englander could swim that far—"

Carter thought swiftly. "Will you come on deck with us, Chekika?"

"Will you put me ashore at the Boca in the morning?"

"Name your terms."

"The *Dragon* must not enter the harbor itself—that would ruin everything. Captain Nichols can come up to the Point from the west, if the wind holds. The Gulf is deep, up to a mile from shore—"

"I see you've thought of everything," said Carter grudgingly.

"I will go overside at the first sandbar, and swim into the Point." The Wildcat smiled thinly. "When I am out of gunshot range, a signal will be given to bring my sense-bearers up from the bilge. Your men can take over from there—"

"How do we know you'll return?"

"I have given my word on that. An hour should be enough for me, after you see I have landed safely. You may sail into the Boca then, and meet me at the dock. Or, if you prefer, I will swim back—"

Their eyes held on that. No one moved as Carter took a step forward, and struck palms with the Wildcat. The sound, sharp as a pistol shot in those narrow quarters, broke the tension magically. Even Nichols smiled, a little, when Chekika descended from the hogshead, his dignity intact.

"Now I can go on deck with a happy heart, gentlemen. I will rest for my work tomorrow—in the open air."

Captain John Carter gave a guilty start as Grady twitched the boat-cloak from his shoulders; he sat bolt upright on his impromptu bunk by the mizzen, blinking at the cottonwool promise of dawn. The *Dragon* rolled easily in a ground-swell; trimmed to jib and staysail, she had cut her way to the merest whisper, as she swam toward the faint boom of surf to the east.

As his vision cleared, Carter noticed that a sailor had straddled the cat-walk amidships with a sounding line; another hung from the bowsprit with teeth and toenails, to scan the oily sea ahead. So that scene 'tween decks was not a nightmare, after all. Nichols, at least, had fulfilled his part of the bargain.

"Five fathoms, sir," said the linesman.

Nichols materialized out of the mist by the helm. Carter could feel the *Dragon* come round into the gentle wind with a great creaking of blocks, like a ballerina who had seen better days. As the jib whipped round too, he saw the Wildcat, magnificent and alone, a copper ghost in the morning. The Seminole was poised on the deck-house roof, naked as some primitive Adam, save for the lanyard that swung at his throat. With no sense of shock, Carter noted that a clasp-knife hung from that rawhide thong. But Carter was on his feet now, still groggy from that guilty slumber, ignoring his sergeant's arm.

"He's been there since midnight, sir. If you ask me, he's going overside any moment; the land's near enough to smell now; maybe an Indian can see it too, for all that mist."

THE mist parted a little, even as he spoke; the horizon to the east had already changed from gray to gold. Carter had a brief glimpse of breakers creaming on a shelving shore, of high dunes that marched east to meet a tangle of bay-grape and palmetto. Nichols loomed before him as the mist closed again, a haggard spectre now, obviously riding his nerves.

"He won't go until I give the order, John. And I can't hold this old tub offshore much longer, without setting a course."

"Sorry to have deserted you for Morpheus," said Carter, with more jauntiness than he felt. He took a step toward the Wildcat, pulling up just in time as he realized he had been about to wish the fellow luck. . . .

"Now?" asked Nichols.

"*Now,*" snapped Carter.

But Chekika had already anticipated the signal. Poised with a foot on the

He plunged straight out—a hurtling copper projectile, lost instantly in the mist. Carter heard the flat slap of his body against the sea.

starboard rail, he raised one hand in a precise salute—a gesture which both Nichols and Carter returned. Then he plunged, straight out—a hurtling copper projectile, lost instantly in the mist. Carter heard the flat slap of his body against the sea, and rushed to the rail. For a moment, the thrash of the Seminole's limbs could be heard above the creak of the ship's blocks. Then even that sound was lost, as Nichols began shouting orders. Carter ducked under the halyards as sailors swarmed for the cross-trees, as though released from invisible springs. The ship's deck hummed with life now, after a taut night of waiting. Carter could understand the universal sigh of relief when the canvas filled and the *Dragon* went into a sweet port tack, away from the shadowy presence of the land.

"Where away, skipper?"

"To fetch the point beacon, if I can. We're going into the Boca, for a look-see."

Carter leaned eagerly over the rail as a great golden sword slashed into the mist from the East. He could see Chekika clearly now, low in the water as an otter swims, driving toward the roar of surf with long, clean strokes. Already, he was nearly two hundred yards from the *Dragon*, as she gathered way: Carter returned the signal, as he raised his arm in a final gesture of farewell. Then he was bawling orders too, in response to a rising tumult below.

The Seminoles tumbled on deck like apples from a winter cellar, to throng the port rail: Carter knocked down his corporal's musket, to give them this last chance to wave their chief farewell. He did not even turn when Day shouldered up the ladder, shoving two damp Negroes before him, a fist wrapped in the collar of each.

"All clear below, Mr. Day?"

"Bone dry and shipshape, sir. These monkeys came up on cue—like you'd pressed a button. The bosun's in the bilge now, tamping those pet-cocks down with spikes."

"Thank you, Mr. Day, that's all I want to know."

The whole deck froze to attention as Captain John Carter tossed Grady his skirted dress-coat, and kicked off his boots. Only Nichols moved, when he vaulted to the rail, and Nichols was too late to stop his headlong plunge.

"See you in the Boca, gentlemen," shouted Carter from the sea—and dug into the sunrise, on the Wildcat's wake.

FOR the moment he had been too concentrated on his objective to heed the twin splash beside him. Now he found himself looking into the face of Sergeant Grady—a dogged mastiff, matching him stroke for stroke as they cut free of the ship's wash and swam for the land. For a moment Carter was sure that Captain Nichols meant to come about and retrieve them. Heads were black along the taffrail; he heard the shouts of the Regulars, herding the Indians into order again. Then, with mingled relief and dismay, he saw that the *Dragon* was swimming away into the mist.

"Did you think I'd let you face the barracuda alone, sir?" asked Grady.

Carter considered that for a moment. He could just make out Chekika's head to the east—more like an otter than ever, now, and drawing slowly away from their dogged pursuit.

"I suppose it *was* too much to ask for, Grady."

"Besides, you forgot your boots," said the sergeant. "Never get far in that sawgrass without 'em sir. I got 'em lashed round my neck, with my own," he added comfortably.

"Save your breath, Grady. You'll need it."

"I, sir? Why, I've swum twice this distance in New York Harbor, with a friend on my back. . . . Just stay a mite closer, will you, sir—and keep up the splashing? Sometimes, they'll keep their distance at that—"

"What are you talking about, Sergeant?"

"I just mentioned the barracuda, sir. They hunt in schools along this coast, when the mullet are running. If you ask me, this one-man trip ashore is the bravest move the Wildcat ever made. Don't let anyone tell you they won't go for an Indian, quick as a marlin or a tuna—"

Carter had swum a bit closer to the sergeant, as though by instinct. Now, he increased the tempo of his stroke, feeling the warm sea brush his flesh with almost visible fins. He had seen barracuda before this, in a tank at St. Augustine. A torpedo of a fish, with cold yellow eyes, a mouth like a bear-trap designed by a madman. He had heard how they hunted in surf itself for prey. How they fastened those nightmare teeth on any living flesh, with the speed of light. He buried his face in a smother of foam, glad that the sergeant had missed the sudden panic in his eyes.

"Perhaps we should have put discretion before duty."

"And miss the show with Jumper? You don't mean that, sir. Even if we're too late to stop it—"

Carter glared across the water—a blinding mirror now, beyond the first curdled breaker, where the sun cut through the mist in earnest. The Wildcat was riding that long roller, feather-kicking to make his body light, losing himself in spray, as the wave slammed across the first sandbar, and roared in to the beach.

"We'll have to hurry, Grady."

CHAPTER IV

RED JUSTICE

HE would never forget the sweet sense of relief when his toes found bottom at last, as he floundered chin-deep in the boiling back-suck of the last wave. Grady had ridden the wave like a porpoise. He was waiting on the beach when Carter emerged, and pouring water from their boots. Beyond, the dunes parted to show a faint path into the scrub. Apparently the Wildcat had ghosted toward that path without a sign, unless the waves had wiped out his footprints.

With no sense of transition, Carter found himself running into the scrub—a booted Neptune who knew the reason for his haste. But he found he had dropped to one knee just the same, to fumble for the service pistol that wasn't there when the shrill bellow keened out of the woods ahead. A cry of pure animal pain, a cross between a rasp and a scream.

"Easy does it, sir," said Grady. "That was only a stuck pig, or I wasn't raised to be a farmer boy. Maybe Jumper is doing his chores early—" He flattened like an agreeable snake as Carter still hesitated, and went over the crest of the dune in one agile wriggle, returning at once to beckon the captain on.

Ragged farmland opened to the east, behind the protecting wall of the dunes, where the scrub dwindled into a few plowed acres still desolate with islands of palmetto scrub. Carter saw the outbuildings clearly, as a man perceives destiny in a dream. He saw the thatch-roof of the cotton-gin, with its slatted sides, where the Wildcat spun the porker about his head in one last whirl, before he dashed out the animal's squeal. Blood dotted the sand of the barnyard in a ritualistic circle, as Chekika tossed the shoat on the porch of the farm-house beyond. And then, Carter saw that Chekika's brother, Jumper, was struggling on that porch, just as the shoat had struggled. That Jumper was stripped to the skin, his shorn hair tousled above the agony of a face that would never smirk again. That blood was pumping from a series of neat gashes in his chest and side—a red stream which the Wildcat augmented now with casual competence, as he turned the crimson geyser from the porker's throat full in his brother's face.

This much Captain Carter saw before he started to run across the farmyard, his cry of protest stuttering in his throat. He had an idea that Grady tried to tackle him as he ran, but he was beyond such diversions now, as his mind grappled with the meaning of that savage ritual. He did not pause, even when Chekika turned calmly from his work, and picked Jumper's own rifle out of the eaves. Only when the bullet sang by his ear did he nose-dive for the soft dust of the barnyard.

Grady spoke chokingly from the background. "Easy does it, sir. This is his show now—we're only the audience."

"*What does it mean, Sergeant?*"

"Only that a Seminole has his own way of killing a traitor. Be honest, sir—you wouldn't stop him if you could—"

"Look, Grady—he's kicking Jumper to his feet—tying that pig around his neck. In the name of all that's holy—"

"Never mention Indians and holiness in one breath, sir. If you ask me, he's taking his brother swimming. At least, they're heading toward the harbor. Maybe they'll let us follow, if we don't get too close—"

Carter had already scuttled to the ambush of the farmhouse porch, as the Wildcat quitted it to take the path to the south. The captain moved cautiously now, as befits a soldier. He remembered a morning at Fort King, in the last year of peace, when Chekika, with a squirrel rifle at his shoulder, had shot the bowls from clay pipes at twenty paces, to win a certain colonel's wager. The memory disturbed him: that morning, too, he had been a spectator. Was Grady right? Would he have held his fire today, even if a service pistol had swung at his side?

His skin prickled as Jumper cried out from the path ahead—a sick howling that turned the new morning gray with a terror of its own. Once again, he stumbled with the weight of the shoat on his chest; once again, Chekika slapped the rifle-butt hard across his spine—and turned easily on his toes, to sweep the farmyard with one glance, marking the white pursuers who hung so respectfully on his trail. Then he burst into a loping run, driving Jumper before him with contemptuous jabs of the barrel. Carter bent like a rabbit and scurried for the shelter of the nearest palmetto, with Grady ghosting obediently at his side.

The harbor was nearer than he remembered; the Boca was a tranquil water-color under the morning, placid as a child's dream of heaven. He marked the gaunt outline of the turpentine still on the high ground to the east—deserted now that the crew had gone into the barrens to tap new trees. He noted the cluster of shacks around the crazy wharf—silent, too, as the lazy souls within slept through the cool of morning, untroubled by tragedy on their doorsteps. There was even time to check on the progress of the *Dragon*—now well

Carter saw the Wildcat lift a screaming copper shape above his head and whirl it into the bay.

around the point, and bearing down on the Boca anchorage with sails straining for the last capful of offshore wind. Carter had reached the shelter of a woodpile before the Wildcat turned again. When the Wildcat rushed his battered brother down the planking of the dock, the captain burst from cover at last, knowing that the game had reached its bizarre climax.

"In God's name, Grady—what does he mean to do?"

"WELL, sir, it's really very simple. Almost an allegory, you might say. When a small fish like a mullet is hiding for its life, it often cuts into a sheltered bay like this, thinking it's safer that way. 'Course, a mullet isn't noted for its brains. When a killer is mad enough, like a barracuda, it'll follow its breakfast anywhere—"

"Come to the point, Grady. Is Chekika thinking of that now?"

"Never wonder what an Indian's thinking, sir. If you ask me, it's more like instinct with the Wildcat. He knows that mullet are running in these bays in the Spring; he knows the barracuda will be snapping at their tails. He killed that shoat, just to make sure they'll come snapping in this direction. If there's anything that draws a barracuda, it's the taste of fresh pig-blood—"

Carter had already run out to the dock, careless of concealment now. He saw the Wildcat lift a screaming copper shape above his head, as easily as though Jumper had been an empty sack; he saw him whirl his burden into the tranquil bay, with enough force to snap the thong binding the shoat to Jumper's throat. The renegade's howl was drowned in a mighty splash. Jumper broke surface in deep water—and began to swim toward the dock again—as well as a man can swim with bound hands.

The Wildcat spread his feet on the string-piece with perfect aplomb, and laid his cheek against the rifle-bore—a vantage point that enabled him to sweep bay and shore with equal ease. But Carter had already halted half way down the dock, for a reason that went beyond fear. Something was stirring a devil's caldron about Jumper now; something that converged upon the renegade from four sides, to lash the water to a bloody foam as Jumper went down for a second time. . . . The Wildcat lowered his rifle dispassionately.

"Come as far as you like, Captain. This is worth watching—"

But Carter could not look, after Jumper's drowning scream—though he remembered afterward that the whole bay seemed a bloody lake in the moment that followed. He was conscious only of the whirl of pale, fishy bodies at the dock's end, a maelstrom of clashing jaws from which nothing human could emerge alive.

He heard a door bang open on a porch behind him; he knew that the foreman of the still had run out in his night-shirt, a musket clutched in one fist. But this was part of a background, to be sorted later. For the present, he could only lean on Grady's arm and stare with sick eyes at the Wildcat, a statue larger than life, now, and supremely careless of the converging white world.

"Come closer, Captain. It's *your* turn to hold court now."

This time, Carter did not duck for cover when the rifle barked. The Wildcat reeled, and pitched neatly forward. Only then did he realize that the shot had come from Day's rifle, high up in the *Dragon's* rigging. Ten minutes later, he was still kneeling at Chekika's side, with no breath to answer Nichols when the skipper vaulted up to the dock.

"I told you it was a classical pattern," said the New Englander. "Would you have ended it otherwise?"

He put a soothing hand under Carter's elbow, and eased him down to the string-piece. A sailor handed up a demijohn from the longboat, without waiting for an order.

"Chin up, John," said the skipper. "You'll see the poetry of it later—won't he, Grady?"

"After we've fished a certain skeleton from the Boca—"

"After we've buried them side by side. Of course, that's white justice, not red. Remember, they were brothers once. They should have lived and died together—in the same world."

Message to Mandakas

BY HAL G. EVARTS

John felt his nerves go taut as he looked at the circle of faces.

ILLUSTRATED BY SAMUEL G. CAHAN

A LITTLE after midnight the submarine surfaced and Corporal John Kondylis paddled ashore. He was a Greek draftee from Chicago and he had volunteered his one skill with the single-minded object of making the best of a bad job and getting home. His orders were emphatic. He had three days to carry them out, no more. If, by then, he had not succeeded, probably he would be either dead or in enemy hands.

The night was dark but a few stars patterned the Mediterranean as he poked into a cove to look for signs of a patrol. Observing none, he stepped carefully on the sand. A breeze had stirred up and he listened, then crouched and unscrewed the valve and began deflating his rubber boat, but a sound swung his attention inland. When the sound had swollen to the unmistakable bark of an exhaust, he covered the boat with kelp and slipped among the higher rocks.

He had yet to fire a shot in this war

but in his matter-of-fact way, John Kondylis never doubted that he would get home, despite the fact that others had failed to return from this same mission. He had never been in Crete, for that matter, but he felt a familiarity from the maps he had studied, and beyond this a sense of knowing, a kind of belonging, which seemed as natural as the knickers and jacket he wore now instead of khaki.

The exhaust stopped once, then again, in brief hushed calm, approaching along the coastal road. John waited until four motorcycles pulled up beside a path leading to his cove before he crawled out on top and flattened. A spotlight was raking the beach and in its glare he could see soldiers, yet he was strangely confident of himself and his knowledge of this country.

To the east, the harbor—his immediate destination—lay in a curve of a shore, while beyond a craggy bulk reared above the headlands into mountains. It would be nice, he thought, if he could find this Mandakas right there, if for once duty and pleasure coincided. Next to the Loop, he would like as much as anything to see those mountains and the village.

Even after the patrol had located his boat, John waited. A soldier called in German and riddled it with bullets, and the others spread out hunting for his tracks. He watched a moment longer, held by curiosity, then backed away and, bending low, ran across the road into the scrub on the other side.

The town's silhouette squatted ahead and he made for it at a lope, a stubborn elation on him. He carried no arms or credentials, only the message in his head, and he recognized that his discovery would alert every garrison. Furthermore Mandakas' whereabouts were uncertain, but John did not concern himself with that yet. His first job was not to get caught.

ON THE outskirts he paused. Blotches of cypress loomed over the buildings which rose in circular tiers and a bomb-gutted ship tilted keel-up in the water. There was no light, no sound but the soft lap of waves. Thoughtfully he picked his way down a narrow street and made out the inscription. After a false turn he reached a house set back in a kumquat grove.

He was sure this was the place, yet tension gripped and held him as he tapped on the window shutter. Everything before had been preliminary, but here and now was the key to Mandakas, as sure as the touch of wood to his hand. He rapped again before hearing footsteps. The door creaked open and a dial of white face showed in the crack.

"Constantinos Zervas?"

"Yes, yes. What is it?" The voice was cross, yet anxious.

"Let me in quickly!"

John did not mention his bad luck for just then the popping noise resumed. Before Zervas could change his mind he pushed inside. "I have an urgent message," he said. "Tell me how to reach him."

The Greek let the door bar fall back into place and John heard him shuffling about in the dark. "Reach who?" he grumbled.

"Who but Mandakas?"

"Ah." The Greek's sigh was audible. "Mandakas. Do not speak so loudly, friend." He struck a match and lighted his lamp. His cheeks shook with fat, which surprised John because he had heard the people were starving, and also he detected the faint odor of fish and cooking oil.

"You are British?"

"Sacred Virgin," John said impatiently, "let us not waste time. Where is he?"

Zervas grunted. "It's not so simple as that. Who can say where he is at any given hour? He comes and goes like a hot wind."

John clenched his fists and stepped forward. "I do not say he cannot be found," Zervas blurted. "It's only that —arrangements must be made."

Momentarily John relaxed. In his zeal perhaps he had been too harsh. Zervas was, after all, the one contact given him. Zervas read this on his face and laughed uneasily. "I will do what I can, friend," he said. "Wait here."

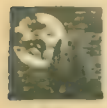
"There is one other matter." John spoke self-consciously, almost with guilt.

"A small matter. Do you know the villages in the Lassithi? I am looking for a particular one."

Zervas shrugged and eased toward a second doorway. "Many have been destroyed in the fighting. When I return. . ."

John settled himself on a bench with a pang of disappointment. His people had come before the last war from a place called Sarchu. That was a long time ago but still they talked about it—all his family. He hoped they had not destroyed Sarchu, that was all.

He glanced around the room, wondering what had become of the messengers before him. He did not distrust Zervas but there was the question of the patrol; they had known exactly where to look. And he felt too that Zervas had been evasive. Surely on this small island no man could remain hidden long.



A DRAFT of cold air brought him to his feet. Zervas had been gone some time—more than enough to cross the town and back. Tight with apprehension, John blew out the lamp and tiptoed down a hall. So far things had been easy, too easy. Without knowing quite why, he did not like the feel of this house.

The draft freshened and he groped on until he came to a back door slightly ajar. Peering out, he saw a low wall beyond the trees; behind that the foothills lifted in a jagged outline. He was working from trunk to trunk in that direction when the rustle of leaves startled him, and over his shoulder he caught the dull glint of a steel helmet.

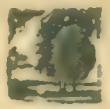
At the same time pounding broke out in front and John knew he had been reported because the Germans could not have traced him here so soon. Stung with a dull fury, he dropped to his belly and covered the last few feet to the wall. He heard the crash of splintered wood, and then, as he hoisted himself to the top, a shout.

He dropped into a dry stream bed and cut across a vineyard terraced up the far slope. Plunging on through brush, he topped a ridge and trotted along its crest as his muscles worked into a steady rhythm. Dust kicked up in puffs, muffling his steps, and the silence reassured him. Already he felt at home, half conscious of old associations quickening like some forgotten dream. The Germans had every advantage but he had the feel of the land in his blood.

His orders did not cover this point but it occurred to him that someone in Sarchu might help him—someone safer than Zervas. Suddenly this small matter had become large, and he had a sharpened perception of each detail that must guide him now. At least, John thought grimly, he would get a look at those mountains.

The terrain steepened rapidly into a savage jumble of sage-clad ravines. The wind had turned chill and he shivered at a new note that crept into the night—the yap of hounds. He ran hard a while, then listened again, but the yapping persisted, so he knew for certain they had his scent.

To himself he would not admit any fear. He had a lead. If he could maintain that lead, even part of it, he might be able to keep his rendezvous with the submarine three nights off. He waded several hundred yards up a brook, then doubled back and forth. It would not fool the Germans for long, but any time he gained was that much to the good.



THE sky was beginning to pale when he climbed out on a lofty summit where a shepherd was watching a flock of goats. He came to a weary halt, no longer able to hear the dogs. The shepherd turned and he saw she was a girl. Outlined against the dawn she gave him the same vague impression of familiarity and he walked to her instinctively.

Her face had a gravity, a look he had never seen on the faces of other girls, and she did not smile easily. "Sarchu?" she answered. "Yes, it's the next village."

John swallowed in relief. The girl's eyes remained guarded and he had no cause to linger, but he said, "I'm looking for a man called Mandakas."

She stiffened. "There is no one of that name here."

"But you've heard of him?"

"Who has not heard of Mandakas?"

He took a deep breath, savoring the day's early warmth. It was good to be near a pretty girl again and briefly he rejected the thought of danger. "I'm a native," he said, "but now I am coming from America."

The girl's expression was noncommittal. She said, "If you are a native then you will know we do not discuss such things with every stranger who happens along."

The rebuke touched John's pride because he felt a share in Mandakas' accomplishments, as though in his own small way he were part of the fame that had sprung up around that name, but nevertheless he appreciated her suspicion; nobody was more eager to find Mandakas than the Germans. "I learned that," he said. "You can't tell who is friend and who is traitor."

"Traitor?" The girl flushed.

He pointed. The country fell away precipitously and far below light dappled an olive orchard. She looked blank and then her eyes widened as a cluster of brown specks moved into sight. They paused and jogged ahead at an uneven speed, trailing a pair of excited dogs. Their machine-like precision drove a first thin wedge of doubt into him; to Zervas he had mentioned no specific place but in time they could comb the entire area. "Now," he said, "do you believe me?"

She measured him without haste. "You do not have a gun to kill their dogs with," she said, "and you can't outrun their horses. Even if you know the mountains as I do, they will take you."

"So?"

"So you are either crazy or a liar." Her lips twitched. "But that's not for me to decide."

She motioned him to follow. John hesitated, then swung down a path after her, aware of her resentment and puzzled by it. She had an aloofness beyond his reach, yet he sensed that he had no choice but to go with her, that whatever happened now was somehow inevitable.

They descended upon Sarchu abruptly. It was cupped in a hollow, as a half-closed palm might cup a kernel of corn. Figs and acacias shaded a knot of thatched cottages and water dripped from the public well and oleanders were in bloom beside a tiny church. John stopped and rubbed a sleeve across his face.

It was as he had imagined it would be, perfectly right and pretty much intact. He was glad they hadn't done anything to change it because he knew how his folks would feel. There was a difference between Sarchu and Chicago, a big difference, but home was where you came from.

Satisfaction filled him as he crossed the deserted market place, but he did not try to describe the sensation, not even to himself; it was something not readily put into words. She led him down some stairs and left him with a sign to wait, and it pleased him to think that this very house might once have belonged to a Kondylis.

When she came back she was carrying some milk and gray-looking bread. "You had better eat while you can," she told him.

John caught her eye. "What's your name?"

Surprise crossed her face, then the watchful look returned. "Aneli—if it matters."

"It does matter, Aneli. Aneli and John. Our names go well together."

She sniffed. "What's a name? A symbol for something. We are nothing; we no longer have names."

HE TURNED as a shadow fell across the shaft of sun that slanted through the open door. A slight, white-haired man stood there blinking, a rifle under his arm. His eyes met John's with flat searching candor.

"This one you may call Rouphos," Aneli said with sarcasm.

The man nodded at John and his face wrinkled into a smile. "My granddaughter is uncivil," he said. "I apologize for her."

The girl's lips tightened but Rouphos said, "Be quiet, child. The others will be along directly."

John looked from one to the other in wonder. He had only a mental picture of Mandakas and this man did not conform; he did not look like a partisan chief

who for more than a year had held out with his band, cutting German communications and raiding their depots.

There were rumors about Mandakas; he decapitated his enemies and spiked their heads on bayonets; he was everywhere at once, and nowhere; he was the scourge of God and the Robin Hood of Crete. But these were only rumors. No one outside knew for sure that Mandakas was not a frail old man who minded his granddaughter's manners.

It struck John, too, that the village was still beyond reason. He expected the laughter of children and the rattle of donkey carts and women thrashing their clothes; instead a hush lay thick as the red dust.

He was bolting his food in uncomfortable silence when two men appeared in the entrance and crossed without greeting to a corner and squatted on their heels. These were followed by others in pairs and threes until shortly the room was crowded and John found himself the center of a ring. None bore arms but he supposed these must be guerrillas.

Rouphos lifted his hand. Without prelude he said to John, "Do you mind repeating what you have told my granddaughter?"

The group around him tightened, mutely expectant, and with something like shock John noticed that they were all old, and for the first time he felt ill at ease. Their eyes had an odd sameness, a hard, unyielding quality, as though they had taken some of the mountains into their hearts. "It's true," he said. "A certain pig who calls himself Cretan is squealing to the Nazis for food to fill his big belly."

A dark, stocky peasant thrust out his jaw. "I say it's a lie!"

"Wait, Hadjikos." Rouphos faced John with quiet authority. "Can you prove this?"

"The Germans will prove it for you if we stand here talking."

"They have been here before, the Germans," Rouphos said. "Several times."

John frowned. "That can wait. I must see Mandakas."

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There was a long, astonished pause before Rouphos cleared his throat. "Many people would like to see Mandakas," he said slowly.

His deliberation irritated John, and he saw that Rouphos, for all his mildness, was going to be obstinate. With an effort of control he said, "I have a message for him that means help for you all."

"You're the one who's asking for help, I say." The man called Hadjikos spat. "How do we know you're not an informer?"

"Why, my father . . ." John began.

Outside needles of rock stood glazed against the sun, and a numbing futility closed over him. Because he had identified himself with Sarchu he found it hard to realize that this was not his village and never had been; whatever roots he once had here were long since dead. "Let me talk with Mandakas," he pleaded. "That's all I ask."

"Is that all?" Hadjikos said. His mouth curled in sly amusement. "What is this—message? Suppose you tell us."

John squared his shoulders. He suspected he had been a fool, or worse, to come in the first place, but his duty now seemed clear. He said, "I'll deliver the message myself."

THE words stuck in his mouth as a shrill yelp reached across the morning and burst into chorus. He felt his nerves go taut as he looked around the circle of faces. They were stupid, these old men, he thought in desperation, like cattle. To them he was a foreigner. He turned toward Aneli for support but her eyes were hostile, and he knew that nothing he might say would touch her.

"You're afraid," he said. "You're afraid they'll destroy your village, bomb it like they've bombed some others who fought back. Is that it?"

A murmur stirred across the room but Rouphos raised his voice. "You know what to do. Get out!" He swung the rifle toward John. "Everyone but you."

They filed out as they had come, heads bowed and without talk, swiftly, and John was alone again with the old man. Only Aneli hung behind, her eyes on Rouphos, and John saw she was trembling. Fiercely Rouphos waved her after the others.

She then ran up the steps and John could hear the receding patter of her sandals. Rouphos passed a hand over his eyes. "I'll have to turn you over to the Germans," he said. "Otherwise there would be reprisals."

John overtook Zervas on the path, grabbed a stone and closed in on him fast.

"Why don't you shoot me?" John said. His voice was hoarse. "Maybe they'll give you a reward."

"One of us is wrong," Rouphos went on unperturbed. "You or me. We'll find out which."

He was not Mandakas, John told himself bitterly. There was no Mandakas; the conviction flashed through him. Mandakas was dead. He was a legend, a myth who didn't exist.

He raised his hands and walked ahead of Rouphos out into the empty square. In the glare Sarchu was drowsy as it had first seemed, then suddenly the illusion exploded into a clamor of drumming hoofs and insane barking as the patrol swept down upon and around them. In a daze John counted a dozen or so riders. They fanned out to cover the village while an officer dismounted stiffly and leashed the dogs and then advanced on foot with one of his men.

In one hand he clutched an automatic and with the other he went through John's clothes. He stepped back in disgust and snapped a question, and the second man replied in German, then said in Greek. "This is the one all right, captain, and from the looks of him I doubt if he has delivered any messages."

John looked around into the face of Constantinos Zervas. The Greek's eyes were red from lack of sleep and in them he saw the naked greed he had missed before. Zervas grinned at Rouphos. "But this one here," he said, "is hardly worth bothering with."

Cautiously the captain picked up the rifle Rouphos had laid at his feet. Scowling, he crossed to the well and emptied the magazine. Then he smashed it again and again over the coping and tossed the wreckage into the water.

ROUPHOS' gaze was fixed in space when the German walked back and shot him. For an instant his eyes gleamed before the light faded out and his lids drooped. Almost grudgingly his body gave way and slumped face down, and blood trickled from the hole in his head, forming a dark pool in the dust. The captain prodded him with his toe and indicated John.

"So this is the place?" Zervas said. His eyes flickered over the village.

John locked his teeth. He had not believed he could hate, but hate was in him now and all of it came to focus on this fat, mocking face. The soldiers had finished their house-to-house search and were bunched beside their animals, and the captain stood hands on hips, watching in perplexed annoyance.

"You may as well talk, friend," Zervas went on, "because these devils will squeeze it from you sooner or later. "Now"—his eyes narrowed—"where is Mandakas?"

After a pause Zervas said. "You don't know, eh? Then why come here?"

"My people were born here. That's why." John felt a little ridiculous.

"The captain's in a nasty humor. I don't advise you to fool with him." Zervas mopped the sweat from his face. "Come on! Where is he?"

"I tell you I don't know."

Zervas snorted. He interpreted for the German, then he told John. "The captain says all the young men from this dung heap of yours were executed last month, and the children are being held hostage. If you speak up, though, the buildings may be spared this time. That's what he says. But first he wants to know where your neighbors went to?"

John shook his head dumbly, yet with inner comprehension. They had killed off the young men and they were killing off the children. That explained a great deal. He thought of his own family at home, secure and well-fed, and in his anger he was ashamed.

"They're hiding, aren't they?" Zervas kicked his shin. John choked back a gasp and braced himself. A sort of lull had stolen over the village. Even the horses and dogs had ceased their restless movement and the soldiers waited immobile.

"You won't get off easy like the old man, I promise you," Zervas threatened. His eyes froze in sudden alarm. "Why didn't he clear out too?"

John stared over his head at the thatch roofs and the rocks rising beyond like spires, and his mouth went dry. All at once he understood why Rouphos had stayed behind to surrender him.

And as though it were a written command John saw too the one way, the only way, to show his faith.

"The old man," he said, "had guts."

HE LUNGED into Zervas, bearing him down. Simultaneously rifle fire crackled from the rim-rock. With marvelous agility the Greek squirmed free and bounded to his feet and ran headlong for the nearest brush. As John dodged after, he did not see the captain try to aim, then spin and collapse, because his mind had narrowed to a single purpose, shutting out the panic of men caught by surprise in a trap.

He overtook Zervas on the path, grabbed a stone, and closed in fast, as he had been taught. The Greek reeled back, struggling wildly before John got a grip, then by degrees went limp under his fury. John pushed the body away, spent and without emotion, conscious only of the job ahead.

Through the branches he could see the square and two Germans dropped by the first volley. A third attempting to reach his saddle had fallen, and the horses had stampeded, but the rest were barricaded in the church and returning fire. He was crawling away when the girl and Hadjikos joined him. Aneli glanced at Zervas and her eyes dimmed.

John touched her shoulder. "No," she said, "Rouphos didn't mind at all. I know he didn't." She shook her head in dismissal. "He would have made a bad prisoner."

Hadjikos stretched out with his rifle and sighted methodically. Bullets were whining from every angle and by their sound John knew that guerrillas surrounded the village, had been there ready when the Germans rode in. He said, "How many are you?"

Hadjikos' face was a dark mask of concentration. "We are enough. Enough for what we have to do."

Sizing up the situation, John saw that the eight or ten Germans left with their automatic weapons could stop any charge. "You'd better pull out," he said. "They'll hear this shooting down below."

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10 DIME DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

The November issue is on sale now.

"Wait." Aneli's eyes were stern now.

A yell went up from the church. John groaned as a peasant darted into the open and rushed toward it. A blast of fire halted him, but he pulled himself together and staggered on like some jerking, grotesque toy. He made the side wall and with a last reserve of strength hurled a packet of straw onto the roof, then sank into a heap. In awe John watched a coil of smoke waver up and flames lick across the dry thatch.

A sickly odor of charred grass swirled out and the village shimmered in heat waves. Sparks were jumping from house to house, touching off smaller blazes that quickly fused into one mass of orange and red and angry yellow. The hiss and pop of burning wood deadened the bark of guns and a fine hot ash sprinkled down.

The heat was unbearable and smoke obscured the church now, but the gilt cross shone out for a moment before a spout of flame leaped up to engulf it and the ridge pole started to sag. There was a crash and a soldier dashed out of the dense black clouds. Hadjikos picked him off. One after the other, as fast as they appeared, the Germans went down in their tracks.

The guerrillas were assembling in a silent knot on the ridge when John came up with Aneli and Hadjikos. Behind a sheet of fire rose into the sky. Together they pressed on to the next ravine, without looking back.

THE sun was a molten ball low in the west. He sat beside Aneli in the mouth of a cave-like fissure that overlooked the sea. Waves whispered on the shore below and he could hear Hadjikos talking in a low voice with the others. Overhead a plane droned back and forth in fruitless search.

"Tomorrow night," Aneli was saying, "a fishing boat will take you where you have to go."

In the distance a pillar of smoke still hung above the horizon, and John said, "What of you?"

She shrugged. "You have seen how it is here. Someday I'll go—back."

He did not speak what was in his mind. He had discovered he was just another South Side Greek, a soldier out of the slums, and not the best soldier either, but above that he had found a bond with this girl. "It won't be too long," he said soberly. "Our troops will be landing here with guns and tanks and planes."

"And that's your message?"

"That's it. And when we do we'll need help from Mandakas. All the help he can give. That's what they sent me for—to establish liaison."

Aneli studied him and a rare smile came to her face. "What would you say if I told you that you've already met him?"

He looked up sharply. "It's hard to explain," she said. "Mandakas was a general left after the evacuation. He organized his men and some British and Australians. Two German divisions could not catch him. But for a long time now nobody has actually seen him."

"He's still alive?"

"Of a certainty he is alive! Or anyway his spirit is."

John rubbed his chin. "Spirit?" he said. "Well, how can you deliver. . ."

"Everybody is Mandakas. Rouphos was, Hadjikos, me and you, too—all of us together. Each of us individually is a little piece of Mandakas. That's the important thing. Don't you see?"

"Sure," John said slowly. "I see."

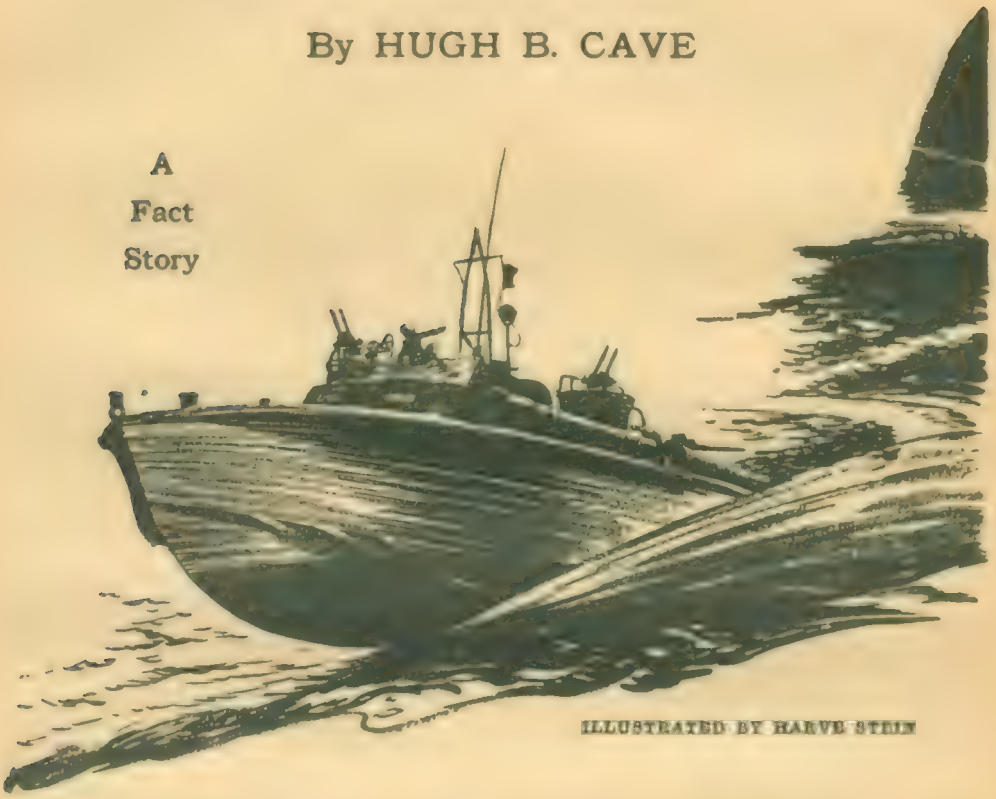
He didn't really. But he knew that whenever his outfit did land, the people of Crete would rise up—every man, woman and child—and help drive the Germans into the sea. That much was sure.

His fingers closed over hers. His mission had failed, he supposed, but in a larger sense it seemed successful. He thought of the report he must make to his officers, and the letter he should write home, and of the things he would not include in either, and found all of them good. He would be coming back soon.

A FEW TONS OF PLYWOOD

By HUGH B. CAVE

A Fact Story



ILLUSTRATED BY HARVE STEIN

Stand by with eight Motor Torpedo Boats for action somewhere to the westward.

SUCH were the orders received by Lieutenant Commander Alan R. Montgomery in the summer of 1942, at the Panama base where his midget mosquito boats were stationed. A short time later in the dog days of August, cargo ships arrived to take the first four PTs and their equipment out. Squadron "X" was thus officially born.

Montgomery and his men were not told where they were going, nor was there much time for conjecture. When the cargo ships arrived, officers and men worked night and day, stowing aboard stores and ammunition. The boats were cradled and loaded.

On August 29 the first four boats said good-by to Panama.

The remaining four PTs, in charge of Lieutenant Hugh M. Robinson, Squadron Executive Officer, were scheduled to follow shortly.

On the voyage out Squadron Commander Montgomery was stricken with pneumonia and was flat on his back under treatment until he arrived at the South Pacific base, where his PTs were assigned to the command of Admiral

She came about and with the throttles wide open, raced for cover. Behind her the night burst into flame as a torpedo hit the mark.

Kelley Turner, Commander of Amphibious Forces in the South Pacific.

"There I was told," Montgomery says, "to make all necessary preparations to be towed to our destination. This took time. Equipment at the base was not what it might have been, and we had the devil's own job getting our boats into the water. PTs are small and made mostly of plywood, it's true—but they pack a lot of weight below decks, and you can't just pick them up and walk off with them. Lieutenant "Rosie" Ryan had a leg broken. Another man was cracked on the head by a boom. A dozen were beautifully black and blue.

"We got the job done, however, and then the boats were fueled and camouflaged, painted dark green so as to be as nearly invisible as possible against the jungle backgrounds of the region we were bound for. Beed, Ramsdell, Cline, Peterson and the other machinist's mates gave their engines a final going-over. Golden, Long, Hoover and Tufts rechecked the equipment.

"The men really babied those boats. For one thing, these PTs were not the gorgeous new craft that some people seem to think they were. They had been in service almost a year and differed little in design from the boats in which Bulkeley, Kelly, Cox, Akers and their men fought so valiantly in the Philippines.

"And we really loved the boats. I don't think I'm a sentimental sort, but there is something about a motor torpedo boat—maybe its size, or lack of size—that makes it very human. When you have lived with one, nursed it, teased it to best behavior and cussed its frequent temper tantrums, you reach a frame of mind where, if that little 77-

foot sliver of plywood and punching power were suddenly to wink an eye and talk to you, you wouldn't be too surprised.

"Another thing: the boats were home to us. We weren't back in Panama now. We were on the prowl, separated for God knows how long from wives and sweethearts. The boats were all we had—four small boats for forty men. Don't get me wrong. I'm not sentimental. You wouldn't call any of us sentimental. But you feel those things all the same. They're important."

The first contingent of Squadron "X" left the base on October 6. It was a bright, breezy, travel-folder morning. Out of the little port, destination still unrevealed, steamed a converted yacht and a cargo ship, stern and gray in their war paint. The yacht, skippered by Lieutenant Commander Charles B. Beasley, was to be the PTs' tender.

Beasley was having his troubles, too. Much of the equipment he so sorely needed was back in the States, where indifference and shrugged shoulders had been the answer to his frantic requests for cooperation. "Hell," he'd been told, "you're not going anywhere. We need that stuff for a real warship."

As a matter of record, the yacht was the first and for a long time the only ship of any size to be based in the explosive fighting zone to which the PTs were going. Other ships sneaked in, unloaded with all possible haste, and fled out to safer regions. Beasley stayed.

AT the start the trip was placid enough. Before it ended, it was rough indeed. High winds pushed up a sea through which the cargo ship lumbered with decks awash and the PTs' tender had to fight for headway. The tiny mosquito boats bobbed and skittered like bits of paper on a kite-tail. Tow-lines parted with annoying frequency. When they snapped, the PTs had to roar ahead under their own power to hook on again. In those heaving seas it was dangerous work.

On the morning of October 10, drenched and weary from four days of pounding by high seas and violent winds, Squadron "X" reached another South Sea base. The men were still officially unaware of their ultimate destination but secretly certain now that they were bound for the string of lady-finger islands to the northwest—the Solomons—where American and Jap forces were trading blows with increasing animosity on land and sea.

"At this base," says Montgomery, "I received orders to fuel to capacity at once and be ready to leave on a moment's notice. When the men heard that, they knew we were in—with action just over the horizon."

Getting the rest of the way and into that action was a ticklish bit of business that had to be worked out with extreme attention to the matter of timing.

The four PT boats were to be towed out of the base by a pair of old DMSs—four-stacker destroyers which had seen action in World War I. The delicate part of the plan was to arrive before dark at a point from which the mosquito boats could cut loose under their own power and, by roaring through the night at top speed, make their destination before daylight—and before they ran out of fuel. If dawn found them still at sea with any considerable distance still to be covered, there was the very excellent chance that Jap planes, on patrol, would spot them and put them out of business. For the Japs had control of the air. Only above Guadalcanal, where Marine fighters could rise to dispute them, were they meeting sufficient opposition to make them cautious.

Moreover, there was the element of surprise to be considered. Montgomery's men now knew where they were going. Their base was to be Tulagi, a tiny island occupied by Marines on August 7 as part of the same operation which established American forces on Guadalcanal. They knew, too, the nature of the particular job they were to do. It was to put a stop, if possible, to the nightly shelling of Guadalcanal by Jap ships which slipped down from Bougainville—the "Bougainville Express"—and were depriving the Marines on Guadalcanal of sleep.

Surprise, therefore, was a potent weapon not to be risked lightly. If the PTs could reach Tulagi and hole up without being spotted, their first noc-

turnal sortie against the enemy would come as a bolt from the black, catching him completely off guard.

MARINES held part of Guadalcanal and all of Tulagi. The channel between, about twenty miles wide, was no man's land. Running up to the northwest is a double chain of islands—Santa Isabel and Choiseul on the east, the Russell and New Georgia Islands on the west. At the top of that tube sits Bougainville, on which the Japs were solidly entrenched.

Night after night, with all the gall in the world, the Nips had been pouring down from their Bougainville base. They knew—and they knew the Marines knew—that the dark nights belonged almost exclusively to them. Those Grumman Wildcats on Guadalcanal could not go out in the dark to hunt them down, nor were there any shore guns on the island big enough to touch them. And they were always mighty careful to be out of there, well out of range, by daylight.

"If we could put a stop to that," says Montgomery, "or even scare them into being a little less brazen about it, the situation would be improved. Remember, our Marines had been on Guad since August 7. From the beginning, Jap Mitsubishis had been over in daylight, raining bombs on them, and Jap troops had been doggedly trying to squeeze them out of their little strip of land around Henderson Field. All day every day they ducked bombs and fought Japs. Then at night, when they wanted sleep, these Jap destroyers and cruisers would slip down through 'the slot' to pour explosives into them, driving them into foxholes.

"We were going to try to stop that. Somebody had to. Marine airmen were making the Mitsubishis pay dearly for the daylight bombings, and from the bloody battles of the Tenaru, the Matanikau and Lunga Ridge, the Japs on Guadalcanal were learning that the job of pushing the Marines back into the sea was going to call for reinforcements . . . but the task of winning some sleep for those men was ours.

"And speaking of reinforcements, we had work to do there, as well. The Bougainville Express was doing more than just keeping our marines in foxholes all night. It was getting Jap troops ashore with disturbing regularity. The enemy had about given up trying to do that by daylight—his losses were too great in the face of our air protection—but at night he managed to get his men onto the island, a few here, a few there, and the Jap strength on Guad was continually being bolstered by these men who sneaked ashore under cover of darkness.

"Our job was to stop that, too, and we were counting heavily on the element of surprise in doing it. When the Japs did learn of our presence, we wanted to be very sure they found it out from *us*.

WHEN the lines were cast off from the escorting four-stackers just before dark on the evening of October 11, the PTs were on their own. Montgomery rode the boat captained by Lieutenant John Malcolm Searles of Leonia, N. J. One PT was skippered by Lieutenant Henry S. "Stilly" Taylor of Cold Spring Harbor, L. I. At the wheel of another was Bob Searles, John's brother. The last was captained by Lieutenant Thomas Kendall of Minneapolis. This boat's regular captain, Lieutenant Robert C. Wark of Portland, Oregon, had been flown into Tulagi ahead of the boats to make preliminary arrangements. They were ready for the worst. Plans were complete and every man was on the alert. Now at top speed the four thunder-bugs roared farewell to their escort and raced for Tulagi.

For Montgomery and his men this was strange territory. Their charts, of course, had been memorized. The shape and name, if it had a name, of every knob of land was fixed firmly in their minds from long hours of map study. But it was a weirdly wonderful world after all.

The night was dark but not quite black. A pale wash of starlight dimly polished the smooth sea and silvered the comet-tails of phosphorus in the boats' wakes. Out of the dark, odd shapes took form with perilous swiftness if they were near, or with tantalizing slowness if large and distant. At forty-five knots, in waters renowned for the inaccuracies of their charting, anything could happen.

Toward morning, as the boats round-

ed the eastern end of Guadalcanal Island and swung into Lengo Channel, the monotony of racing at full throttle through tricky darkness was suddenly shattered. Ahead, lightning flashed and thunder rolled. But the lightning was a quick, bright burst of gunfire; the thunder was a rumble of naval guns near Savo Island, the sound echoing back and forth along the dark peaks of Guadalcanal and Florida.

"We slowed our speed," says Montgomery, "and looked the situation over—what we could see of it. Obviously our navy and the Japs were having some sort of altercation near Savo Island. It might be a minor action, a quick trading of blows in the dark, or it might be something big.

"In either case, there was a strong possibility the Japs would come pouring out the eastern end of the channel and meet us head on. That was bad. We were nearing the end of our run, remember, and fuel was dangerously low. Moreover, we were loaded with extra equipment and had a lot of the base force personnel aboard. If the Japs did turn into us, we'd be in the unenviable position of a man trying to fight with his feet tied and his arms full of bundles. We went ahead slowly, with our fingers crossed, every man ready to jump into action at a second's notice. And we were jittery."

But the Japs did not come. The rumble of gun-thunder grew faint, and the four PTs were soon speeding on course again. Later they were to learn that they had come within a few minutes of being an impromptu part of the Battle of Cape Esperance, in which units of the United States Fleet surprised a Jap landing operation and sent the enemy reeling back to the northward with the loss of a cruiser, four destroyers and a transport.

Dawn was but half an hour distant when the boats reached Tulagi. Their margin of safety in regard to fuel was a little less impressive.

Remarked Dutch Ebersberger, machinist's mate, a stocky, muscular lad with a hearty sense of humor: "We got plenty of gas. Almost enough to clean a midget's pants, if he was a nice, tiny midget. What, for Pete's sake, were we worried about?" He turned to Happy Parker. He and Parker, also a machinist's mate, were always riding each other, always together.

Said Parker dryly: "Maybe you'd like to do it over again."

They could laugh then. The tension of the run was over. But the night's ordeal had told on every man in the outfit. All were exhausted, dirty, soaked with sweat and salt water.

"Silent Joe" Nemec, who was to succumb later to an attack of peritonitis, looked around wistfully and said with a laugh—Joe never raised his voice: "If only we had some nice, feather-lined foxholes now, that a fellow could stretch out in for a couple of weeks." But there was no time for foxholes. Before daylight came with its threat of Jap bombers, the PTs had to be holed up and hidden.

THE men, like Chief Boatswain's Mate Charlie Tufts, who seemed to be everywhere, worked their arms nearly off in the next few hours. First they had to scout the shores of Tulagi for suitable hiding places; up tiny jungle creeks, in the shelter of winding inlets, under sprawling mangroves whose roots reached down through iridescent salt water and clung like octopus arms to the coral bottom. Then the boats had to be hidden, serviced, readied again for action, and carefully smothered under canopies of camouflage. The Japs, who winged daily out of the north in their big, fast bombers to strike at Henderson Field, more often than not paid Tulagi a visit enroute. And they were smart.

"All that day," says Montgomery, "the men worked. They were dead on their feet and ready to drop, but there simply was no time for rest. As Squadron Commander, I went up to Marine headquarters to report to General Rupertus (Brg. Gen. William H. Rupertus of Washington, D. C.) and then rode one of the island's two yippies over to Guadalcanal, to report to General Vandegrift (Maj. Gen. Alexander A. Vandegrift of Lynchburg, Va.) who was in command there.

"It didn't take long for word to get around among the Marines on Guadalcanal that I was a PT man, and the re-

ception I got was really wonderful. I suddenly was surrounded by hundreds of friends I'd never met before!

"I like to think, of course, that this was because our boys were PT men. Perhaps that was it. Certainly those Marines didn't have to be told why we'd come and what we were going to try to do for them. But perhaps the reason for the reception I got goes deeper. Remember, those boys had been taking all the Japs could send at them since August 7, without reprieve. When they found out that our squadron, or half squadron, of motor torpedo boats had come in to work with them, they may have felt that here at last was recognition, however small, for the job they'd done. They hadn't been forgotten after all.

"But mostly they were thinking of those damned Jap ships that slipped down the slot at night to shell them. They had an amazing string of unprintable names for that nocturnal annoyance, and were counting on us to do something about it.

"I remember one haggard, red-eyed youngster who came up to me with a Jap knife stuck in his belt and said, 'Just teach the bastards to stay home in bed nights where they belong. Just do that, will you?'

"I hoped we could do it."

That evening, after a day spent in smoothing out plans for action, Montgomery flew back to Tulagi in "The Duck"—a utility plane maintained by the Marines for liaison work and shuttle service between the islands. The PTs were shipshape, and the commander spent the rest of the evening at Marine headquarters on Tulagi, working out problems of communication and cooperation. The men, meanwhile, were industriously setting up a base.

It was quite a base. Located in Sesapi, a village once occupied by natives (and perhaps, before the coming of the Japs, by a few whites also) it consisted principally of a broken down marine railway and a few sad shacks. The railway was worthless. The shacks were little more than upright poles capped with Vs of thatch and populated profusely by a wonderful assortment of bugs. Nevertheless, it was home.

The native shacks were reinforced and put to various uses, one converted into a storehouse, another into the squadron office. While work was progressing on the latter, Johnny Johnson, a quartermaster, came forward with a PT emblem—the famous "fighting mosquito" emblem designed by Walt Disney. These had been removed from the boats when the battle zone was reached, because even at night they shone gloriously and made enticing targets.

Johnny proudly climbed up on a box of replacement parts and nailed the fighting mosquito over the squadron office doorway. Squadron "X" had arrived. It was now official.

Said Machinist's Mate Winter, a tough little guy whose dual hobbies were kidding his officers and borrowing their money: "Well, this is it. Bring on your Japs."

SQUADRON "X" had arrived at Tulagi the morning of October 12. A little more than thirty-six hours later the boats were in action.

"We got word the afternoon of the thirteenth," Montgomery says, "that a Jap task force was 'in the slot' and moving down toward us. Apparently it consisted of three destroyers, or a cruiser and two destroyers. Patrol planes had spotted them and the word was passed along to us.

"When I heard it, I went at once to General Rupertus to find out what he thought about it. I told him I didn't consider it wise to sacrifice our number one weapon of surprise on so small an enemy. No fooling—that's what I told him. It will give you some idea of what we thought of those boats of ours.

"The general agreed that we should wait for something really worth while. He smiled as he said it. Now that I look back on that little conversation, I realize what he was smiling at; but at the time, there was nothing very droll to me in the idea of four midget PT boats haughtily refusing to attack a trio of Jap destroyers because the Japs weren't big enough.

"We stood by, however, out of hiding and ready for whatever might develop.

The men were nervous and eager, going through all the emotional tension of a fighter about to step into the ring for his first bout. In his mind, each was undoubtedly going over the hundred and one things he had been taught, wondering if, when enemy guns began thundering, he would come up to scratch. I was wondering myself."

Soon after midnight, guns began a booming conversation in the vale of ink between Tulagi and Guadalcanal—that restless stretch of sea called "Sleepless Lagoon" by the harassed Marines. The guns were big ones and the conversation was one-sided. The island remained silent. Down from Cape Esperance toward Lunga Point, Jap ships moved swiftly in close formation, hurling their heaviest shells at Henderson Field and the Guadalcanal shore.

Obviously the enemy had schemed up something more than loss of sleep for the Marines this night. An operation of considerable magnitude was in the making.

"I ordered all boats to get under way immediately," Monty says, "and sent word to General Rupertus that 'this was it' and we were going out."

With engines muffled, the four PTs slipped quietly out of Tulagi harbor and headed for the gunfire across the channel. The night was tar black; there was no moon at all, and thick low clouds concealed the stars. But over there off the Guadalcanal shore the darkness was punctured by those bright, bursting balls of fire from Jap guns, and by the gaudy, graceful loops of color hung in the sky by tracers.

The PTs deployed, moving in four abreast, feeling their way forward through the dark. A motor torpedo boat is not an angry bull, thundering to the attack at top speed. It is a marauding cat, belly down, employing stealth and silence.

One boat, Jack Searles at the wheel and Montgomery conning, was slightly in the lead. On her left was the PT with Bob Searles, Bill Kreiner and crew; on her right was the boat with Stilly Taylor, Stan Thomas and their men, and the PT with Bob Wark, Tom Kendall and gang. No one spoke unless it was necessary. This, at last, was what they had come for.

"We moved in," Monty says, "with little more noise than a whisper, and at first maintained contact with one another. Clearing Tulagi harbor there were four of us. But now with action imminent, the other boats got away from us in the dark and you had a feeling of aloneness that sat in your throat like an egg.

"As a rule, of course, darkness is our ally. But this time we had those blinding flashes of gunfire to contend with, nearer now every minute, and it was hell. If only they had let up long enough for us to adjust our eyes—but they didn't, and our eyes never did get adjusted.

"It was like being stabbed continually in a dark room by a powerful searchlight. You'd blink at the glare and feel the brightness of it eating into your head. You could almost feel a kind of physical pain. Then the darkness would come pouring back, deeper and more solid than before . . . and all the time, of course, there was the deafening thunder of the Jap guns, rolling out through the night until it was caught up by the islands and kept alive in echoes.

"And then, closing, we made out our targets. There were four of them. Big ones. Three were cruisers and the other was almost certainly a battleship.

"It was about that time, on Stilly Taylor's boat, that Machinist's Mate Tubby Keifer made the classic remark for which he was kidded ever after. Spotting the nearest of those four Jap monsters, Keifer turned excitedly to Gunner's Mate Kuharski and said in a hoarse whisper: 'Gee, Ski! Ain't that the *Boise*?'

"It was not the *Boise*. No, indeed."

SEARLES' boat continued closing, her engines still muffled. She had selected the last Jap in line for her target and was close, almost close enough. Behind the plexiglass windshield, Jack Searles kept a nervous hand on the throttles, with Monty beside him. Radioman Piper, a quiet, soft-spoken boy who became leather-tough in a fight, crouched in the cockpit with the radio phones hot against his head, maintaining contact with Cavanah, Purvis and Stephenson, the radiomen on the other boats. Quartermaster H. C. "Johnny" Johnson, a

hardened old-timer who had seen his share of brawls, stood ready at Piper's side.

The set-up was perfect. In another moment the torpedoes would slip from their tubes, the boat would turn and make its dash for safety with throttles wide open. Nothing to it. That essential maneuver of PT tactics—the silent approach, the swift surprise attack, the racing retirement—had been run off a score of times in practice. Every man knew every wrinkle of it.

But the boat had performed another maneuver of which her crew was altogether in ignorance. In the dark she had slipped past a force of Jap destroyers without even knowing they were there.

The other boats were less lucky, and suddenly the night became violent.

Two boats had run not through the screening destroyers, but straight into them. Jap searchlights came on, sweeping the sea. The PTs were spotted.

Bob Wark swung his wheel hard over and at full throttle ran from the rain of shells that reached out for him through the dazzling lanes of light. The move was almost fatal. The lights had momentarily blinded both Wark and Lieutenant Tom Kendall, the boat's exec, who stood at Wark's elbow. Now from the brilliant glare they roared into darkness again, and were on top of a second Jap destroyer before they saw it.

Torpedoman "Danny" O'Daniel sent up a banshee yell. The men instinctively ducked. Only Wark's quick reaction, swift as the click of a camera shutter, saved the PT from head-on collision.

He turned the boat just in time. "If I'd had a swab," said Quartermaster Crumpton later, with a shudder, "I could have painted my name on that Jap's side. Boy, we were close enough to see the guys on her gun platforms and hear them holler!"

But the Jap was quick, too. His searchlights came on and his machine-guns began an angry chatter. Luckily his main batteries were out of it; the PT was so close aboard that he could not depress the big guns to train them on her. But the machine-gun fire was vicious.

Todd and Blackwood, the gunners, braced themselves in their turrets and returned the enemy's fire. They had never been under fire before, those boys. This was their baptism. But they knew their guns and their job. The mosquito boat's powerful fifties poured a blistering answer at the Jap, raked his bridge and searchlight platform, shot out his lights. Todd was later commended by Admiral Halsey for his fine shooting that night.

With Machinist's Mates Cline, Nelson and Long teasing every ounce of speed from her engines, the PT sped on into darkness, free from pursuit.

Stilly Taylor's boat was running, too. Enemy destroyers had pinned her in their searchlights and were hot after her—two of them—firing 4.7's and machine-guns. It looked bad.

Torpedoman Wisdom was not grousing now, or if so it was under his breath. Machinist's Mates Peterson and Barnard were not indulging their favorite pastime of kidding each other. Ship's cook Henry Bracy, famous for the succulence of his pies, was not thinking of new ways to tickle the boys' palates.

The two destroyers were gaining. The night was so full of enemy ships that the boat could find no room for running.

"Smoke!" Stilly yelled. "Make smoke!"

Quartermaster Kleinworth relayed the word in louder and lustier language. Wisdom, frozen by an after torpedo tube, dropped his mallet and jumped to the smoke generator. In a moment a dense white cloud was pouring out astern. Stilly gripped the wheel, facing ahead to find a lane of escape through the crowded night. Stan Thomas, at his side, spoke softly, reporting the action astern. The ten men on the PT had been trained as a team. They were a team.

With the Japs fumbling in the smoke, the boat zigzagged through the dark and neatly gave them the slip. Then at full speed she headed out past Savo Island—not to retire, but to try for the prey she had hoped for in the first place: the cruisers and the battle-wagon.

MEANWHILE, Bob Searles and his men were having themselves a time. "When the hell broke loose," says Bob, "we were some little distance from the other boats. How it happened I don't

know—in the dark it's almost a wonder we were there at all. Anyway, when Stilly, Bob Wark and Monty ran into trouble, we were halfway across Sealark Channel. Almost at the same instant, trouble caught up with *us*.

"Lights suddenly came on and there, dead ahead, was a Jap destroyer. Remember, we hadn't known there were any destroyers in this task force—only cruisers and a battleship. This one was as surprised as we were, and we had time to turn and run for it. Luke (Torpedoman Leuckert) was aft on the smoke apparatus, and we soon had a lovely, billowing blanket of white smoke to hide behind.

"The Jap must have thought we were parked there like a sitting duck, because he poured shell after shell into the smoke without coming close to us. So . . . we decided to get him.

"We turned and went for him, but just then saw Bob Wark over at three o'clock. He was apparently having difficulties. His gunners were swapping fire with a Jap who was much too close for comfort. We ran over to give him a hand.

"Just what happened then I don't quite know, nor did Edwards, Mehes and the other boys when I asked them later. There was confusion everywhere. All those Jap destroyers—there were eight of them, we found out afterward—were rushing around trying to protect their big ships, and the four PTs were darting in and out like wasps, fighting to get through the destroyers and close the cruisers. It was a little like an old-fashioned Fourth of July. You'd hear a roar, and one of our boys would come boiling out of the dark and go by you. There'd be a flash of light, a burst of thunder, and a Jap shell would rip up a big, wet chunk of ocean, usually too damned close.

"Anyway, we started over to see what we could do for Wark, and suddenly a big, beautiful target loomed up in front of us. We had closed a cruiser, on her way back up the line to Bougainville.

"It was a set-up. The PT sped for position and at four hundred yards fired her two after torpedoes. One cleared the tube, struck the edge of the deck and went in. The other didn't.

"Now a torpedo is a complicated and tempermental piece of mechanism. When fired, they're dead fish, until their speed through the water winds up a gadget in the war-head and cocks them. Until they're cocked, they won't explode.

"This one stuck in the tube. When that happens, a lot of other things can happen. The fish may get red hot—it's running full blast out of water with nothing to cool it—and weld itself to the tube. If the sea is rough enough to smother it in spray while the boat is making knots, it may cock itself, or 'arm' itself, and go off.

"So there we were, with that torpedo having a hot run in the tube, and our attack incomplete. I don't like to remember it. The only calm man on the boat, I'm sure, was Quartermaster Meadows. He was big and fat, had a beer-belly that someone was always affectionately patting for him. Ice cold, he never lost his head. But I can't say for sure that he was calm then, because I was too jumpy myself to know what anyone else was doing.

"The fish in the tube was making a terrible racket, like a car tearing along with a broken connecting-rod. And we were closing the cruiser. She was only two hundred yards ahead, and we were going on in.

"I suppose I fired the forward two torpedoes. Someone did, and one of those stuck, too. Then we made our turn and got out of there like the well-known bat out of hell—so close that we passed the stern of the cruiser with less than a hundred yards of clearance. She could have blown us sky-high with a hit from one of her big guns, and at that range I can't see how she missed. Her 20 mms. were spouting away at us like Roman candles. We were lucky.

"And suddenly we were jubilant. Because, as we ran for it and dodged those pesky 20's, a terrific explosion tore the Jap open forward. Another followed instantly. We could feel the concussion, the pressure and suction in the air. The Jap stopped firing at us.

"We made for our base then. Our torpedoes were gone, all except the two stuck in the tubes, and there was no point in hanging around. Bill Kreiner

took the wheel and I went below to see if things were shipshape. Down there I found Machinist's Mate Lorraine Beed, the sweetest engineer in the outfit, calmly and methodically checking the engines, just as though nothing had happened. Winter and Nemec worked by his side.

"'Everything all right, sir?' Beed asked quietly.

"I said it seemed to be.

"'That's fine,' he replied. He was always quiet like that, always polite. I don't think I ever heard him swear. When he talked, it was usually about his wife and children.

"'I think we hit a cruiser,' I said.

"He rubbed his oily hands together quite gently and said that was good, very good—and went back to his engines.

"We made for the base slowly, with an eye on those fish half out of the tubes."

JACK SEARLES' boat, was the only one of the four to slip through the destroyer screen without being seen. When the night erupted behind her she was closing her target, the last cruiser in line, and was about five hundred yards off the Jap's bow. The Jap was alert, aware of danger. His lights came on, sweeping the sea. But the PT had not yet been spotted.

She went in another hundred yards, lined up her sights and fired two torpedoes. That was all she had, the other two having been removed to make space for depth charges. Still moving at sneak-in speed with engines muffled—the perfect approach—she sent those two torpedoes winging.

Momentarily the boat slowed to allow the fish to clear her. Then she came about and with throttles wide open for the first time raced for cover. Behind her the night burst into flame as a torpedo hit the mark.

"And right there," says Montgomery wryly, "we got the surprise of our sweet young lives. We'd been running wide open for just about two seconds 'Mex' when Jack Searles, who was always thinking of his engines, said ever so casually: 'We can slow down now, Commander. They didn't spot us.'—and he eased back on the throttles.

"I didn't have a chance to answer him. Right there a salvo of enemy fire burst around our ears, and we were damn near blown off the boat. Jack and I both jammed the throttles wide, practically up through the windshield, and the PT went soaring.

"What had happened—in turning from the cruiser, we had run smack into the whole hornet's nest of destroyers and were neck-deep in trouble before you could say 'Jap!'

"Remember, we had slipped through this destroyer screen without seeing them, and didn't know they existed. We had an idea something was up when the other PTs went into action, but were too busy with our cruiser to pay much attention. Now we were suddenly caught in searchlight beams, and shells began to scream around us.

"We were trapped there between the Jap capital ships and their escort, with Japs pounding us. Everybody ducked.

"It was funny later. We all got a good laugh out of it. Because, of course, there is nothing on a PT boat to duck behind. The cockpit may look comfortingly solid, but is built of three-eighths inch plywood that would hardly stop a good sized hailstone.

"But this was our first time under fire and we were really catching hell, so we ducked. At the same time I had sense enough to jam the throttles full speed forward, and the boat took off at top speed in the general direction of Tulagi.

"We had two destroyers on our tail and they were determined to get us. The gun flashes were so continuous they lit the place up like daylight. The shells came thick and fast. A Jap 4.7 is no toy, remember. It very nearly equals the five-inchers on some of our own warships. You hear a screaming whistle, a shell goes winging overhead with a sudden sharp crack like a pistol shot; then you see a section of sea leap skyward. And all the time you feel the quick, sharp bite of the gun flashes against your eyeballs. It's hardly a picnic."

The PT was winging, but the Japs had the range on her. Their shells came closer. One explosion smothered the fleeing boat with spray and forced her to use every evasive maneuver in the book. Lunging, weaving, throwing herself from

side to side, the little boat fought for freedom. And the Japs gained.

"Make smoke!" Monty shouted.

Torpedoman Willie Uhl, quietly efficient, had been waiting for that. He had quit his place at the tubes and was already over the smoke generator. The white stuff poured out and a Jap shell burst in the midst of it, squarely in the boat's boiling wake. Uhl was thrown to the deck.

He got up again, uninjured. He was tough. The others were tough, too. They were not ducking behind plywood now. In the engine-room, Chief Machinist's Mate Ramsdell, usually a very cheerful guy but now grim and all business, worked like a termite to keep the three Packard 4Ms humming. In the 50-caliber turrets, Happy Parker and Ship's Cook Carideo, whose duties in action embraced more than cooking, were ready on the guns and begging the skipper to let them cut loose. Aft, on the 20 mm., Dutch Ebersberger had the foremost Jap in his sights and was waiting.

The order to fire was not given. The Jap was doing well enough as it was, without presenting him a clear-cut target to aim at. It hurt. It was a sin and a shame. But the PT's guns remained silent.

THE leading Jap was in the smoke now, hunting his prey, but the smoke was thick and the shells he poured into and through it went wide. "We could see his tracers," says Monty, "streaking by us —small red balls of fire, some of which seemed to hang suspended in space for an incredibly long time as they passed us. Those Japs were good gunners but couldn't locate us, nor could they see where the shells were falling. Without smoke we would have been done ducks for certain."

But now the two destroyers were in the thick of the smoke and the Japs knew they were close. They began using machine-guns, spraying the night ahead of them with a rain of bullets. Jack Searles swung the PT wide, and Montgomery turned to shout an order.

"Depth charges! Drop the ash-cans!"

"The idea seemed worth trying," the commander says, "and fortunately it worked. Johnson, Uhl and Gunner's Mate Osborne dumped the depth charges overside so fast it was almost comical—yet when you stop to think of it, such coordination was not comical at all, but remarkable in a gang of boys who had never before found themselves under fire.

"The cans were well astern of us when they exploded. We saw the columns of water go up—swift, climbing towers of spray, very close to the Japs—and the concussions jarred the deck under us. We hardly hoped to damage the pursuing destroyers. That would have been sheer luck, and too much to ask for. But we did hope it would confuse them, perhaps cause them to think they'd run into a mine field. And apparently that's what they did think, because when the cans went off the Japs at once ceased firing."

The PT was making knots then, Ramsdell souping her engines for all they would take. The Japs laid back astern and appeared to be cautious. Elated, Montgomery ordered the smoke pot overside, where it would continue to make smoke and might fool the now nervous enemy into thinking the elusive PT had gone down.

Uhl and Osborne heaved it over. In the machine-gun turrets, Carideo and Parker sighed their disappointment and relaxed. They hadn't fired a shot. Nor had Ebersberger, on the 20 mm. With engines trimmed and muffled, the boat slipped in close to the murky shore of Florida Island.

"Looking back," says Monty, "we could see the Japs nosing around the spot where we had jettisoned the smoke generator, and I suppose those monkeys were excitedly telling one another we were done for. They hovered around the smoke for quite a while, perhaps waiting for what was left of us to come up. When they'd gone, we got under way again.

"Our plan was to slip around Florida and hole up in the first safe hiding-place until daylight when the Japs would go home. It seemed the wisest thing to do, because Sleepless Lagoon was full of Japs and any attempt to go through them, back to our Tulagi base, might be suicidal.

"So at slow speed, ghosting along with

every man alert for more trouble, we felt our way past the Florida shore—and suddenly found the way blocked by a destroyer lying to across Sandfly Passage. Apparently he was doing sentry work for the force which had come steaming into the channel.

"There we were, and there he was, and the only thing we could do was cut our engines, sit tight, and send up a fervent, ten-man prayer that he would not discover our presence. Our retreat was cut off by the Japs astern, who were still sniffing around the smoke."

Those were bad moments and long ones. The PT could not attack. She sat weaponless, with the unsuspecting Jap looming large and lovely, dead ahead. It was discouraging. A single torpedo would have blown the "Jape" to hell, and there was all the time in the world to wish him there. But the PT's torpedoes had been expended on the cruiser. Fluently but softly the men cursed their luck.

Before dawn, the Japs departed. It was safe then to head for home.

WHAT had Squadron "X" accomplished? Four of them had attacked a Jap force of one battleship, three cruisers, eight destroyers. That was the official tabulation. Searles' and Bob Wark's boats had scored hits on a cruiser. The other two had probably killed some Japs with their machine-guns. Was that all?

Not quite, though the men were bitterly disappointed at the time and could not see beyond it. What they had done was disorganize an enemy force of twelve warships, causing it to abandon its mission, turn tail and run. Four little thunder-boats had done that. It was an achievement.

Psychologically they had done more. They had hit the Jap with a new and frightening weapon, putting the fear of God into him. He would be less brazen the next time. He would think twice before sending his heavy stuff into an area so packed with peril.

The cruiser? "We sank her," says Bob Searles. "Who did it we don't know, but she went down with all hands. We found it out next day, when reconnaissance reports came in."

There was a postscript to that battle. Chief Radioman Layton supplied it, a couple of days later, when he emerged from the base radio shack wearing a broad grin and waving a bit of paper.

"Message," he said, "from Tojo, relayed from Australia."

The men crowded around. What they read was a Jap communiqué covering the action in which Squadron "X" had met its baptism of fire. It was as follows:

Seven of our ships engaged nineteen motor torpedo boats during which twelve motor torpedo boats were destroyed and incidentally one of our cruisers was sunk.

Just incidentally!

Perry stood in the stern sheets, unmindful of the terrific barrage that was leveled at the little boat. The captain remained aloof, disdainful.

THE FLEET IN THE FOREST

BY

CARL D. LANE

THE STORY THUS FAR:

CHID ALWYN kept dreaming of the day when he would complete his full apprenticeship at the Tatum shipyards and could sign aboard the *Blessed Cause*, as his friend, NEZ NOTT, kept urging him to do. MOSES LEET, MARY'S father, and Chid's friend and counsellor since his father's death, tried to dissuade him, but the call of easy prize money and loot to be had aboard the privateer made him decide to try to buy his freedom from NOAH

BROWN, the owner of the shipyards. Brown refused the lad's money, urging him to remain and help build the ships so sorely needed in this great sea war with England. When CAPTAIN PERRY came to recruit shipbuilders for the new construction yards at Presque Isle, Chid was greatly impressed, as were the other shipwrights, several of whom signed up, but he still distrusted the flag-waving and patriotic speeches by the recruiters. When a fire broke out in a nearby barn, Chid, aiding the rescue party, pushed Perry to safety, and in the ensuing confusion he and Nez escaped and signed aboard the *Blessed Cause*.

The second day out Chid incurred the enmity of LEFFERTS, the surly captain of marines, by refusing to sign over to him a share in his potential loot in exchange for new clothing. He soon became fast friends with ANTOINE, a cheerful little French-Canadian, who showed him many favors. A few days later the *Blessed Cause* took her first prize, a small dispatch ship, with a scanty crew and no desire to fight. Chid was disgusted with the unnecessary bloodshed and wanton destruction, and the feel of the prize money in his hand was strangely disappointing. He saw now that CAPTAIN FISH and his crew were evil men and that the ship was rotten with a system of cruelty and filthy exploitation. Two days later they captured their second paymaster with the same brutality and bloodshed. Chid soon found that several of the crew shared his revulsion, along with the belief that they would one day be cast adrift or killed and their share of loot divided among the officers. Mutiny was definitely in the wind and Chid began to plan his escape in a small boat. The next day he purposely picked a quarrel with Lefferts, and thereby touched off the spark to open rebellion. During the intense fighting, a Navy warship was sighted with guns blazing. Chid's means of escape had been blown to bits by a salvo from the warship and he, along with those of the crew still alive, were herded aboard the Navy ship to be taken into port for trial. As they neared shore, Chid, Nez and Antoine escaped through a shot hole into the frozen water and took refuge in the hold of a steamboat anchored nearby. They soon discovered that they were headed for Albany and that Noah Brown was also aboard, bound there to join his party and then start out for Presque Isle. They joined his group and then began the long, hard journey to Lake Erie. On the last lap of the trek, some of the men voted to remain in Sacketts' Harbor instead of continuing to Presque Isle, where provisions were scarce and the place a complete wilderness. Chid realized what a change had come over him when he elected to go on to that remote base with Noah Brown.

At Presque Isle, Chid felt great pride in his new job of foreman and in the construction of the gunboat, *Ariel*. He devised many new schemes and shortcuts in shipbuilding which won the admiration and respect of the older men. Work progressed rapidly in spite of the lack of supplies which an indifferent Congress neglected to send them. One night while Chid was on sentry duty, two men approached him, JOHN SHALLUS and CHRISTOPHER KEMP. They operated a mill nearby and offered Chid a job selecting timber for them for shipment to the coast. Chid refused, despite the increase in pay, knowing how much more necessary was his work at the shipyards. He and Nez had formulated a bold plan for obtaining supplies to complete work on the *Ariel*. In a small boat, Chid, Nez and Antoine sailed out into the bay toward the British cruising grounds. They soon became the prey of a large English gunboat, which easily overtook them and demanded surrender. Then, putting their scheme into effect, Chid threatened to ignite the powder casks on their boat unless the British abandoned ship. It was a daring display of Yankee courage and brass, but the enemy complied and Chid sailed back victoriously to the yard with the captured tugboat in tow. Later, Nez revealed that the casks had contained not gunpowder, but black Lake Erie mud. With the stores and equipment from the British ship, work was soon completed on the *Ariel* and her sister ships. In May, Captain Perry arrived to attend the launching and take command. He was

delighted with the little fleet and particularly with Chid's innovations on the *Ariel*. Shortly thereafter, it was discovered that the long-promised guns and ammunition had been grounded on an island, and Chid and Nez set out to try to get them to the yards. On the way, they met a MRS. BAXTER, almost hysterical from fear. Indians had attacked her house, burning and plundering. Chid got the Indians to disperse, promising them food and drink in town. When he and Nez got to Erie, they discovered that a battle was in progress—the British gunboats had begun firing at the shipyards. Chid left Nez behind to cope with the Indians should they come seeking their promised food and drink, and hurried back to the yards. The place was a shambles, one of the ships had capsized, but the *Ariel* was still afloat. He then rejoined Nez who, by this time, was trying to calm down a band of drunken Indians, all bloodthirsty and eager to kill. Chid bribed them with his own money to come to the aid of the Americans. Perry and his men, greatly outnumbered, were fighting a losing battle, when the CORN EATER and his tribe came leaping into battle. The British fled to their boats in disorderly panic and the battle ended in a complete American victory. Success acted as an incentive. New recruits poured in and the damage was quickly repaired. Remembering John Shallus' offer, Chid selected some lumber for his mill, and with this money bought four flatboats on which the vital guns and shot could be brought to Presque Isle. He then struck a deal with AZIAL BAXTER, whose wife Chid had helped in the Indian raid, to ferry the flatboats. With supplies coming in regularly the fleet soon grew, and Perry departed to Ontario to lead the attack on the British at Fort George. Chid had hopes of one day owning his own shipyard on a piece of lakeside property. The land agent, MR. TRUNCHARD, asked more money than Chid had for the tract, but suggested that he buy another site which he could re-sell immediately at a handsome profit, and thus have money to buy the land he wanted. Chid acted on this suggestion, with high hopes of owning his own yard in the not too distant future.

PART IV

CHID reckoned he'd ask a hundred and fifty dollars profit on the land. He'd come out a hundred dollars ahead and, what was more important, have that much of his money in hand against the time when the shipyard tract option would be taken up or let lapse. He was terribly disappointed. That land had grown on him these last months; he secretly considered it almost his own. The price was high, above a dollar an acre. But he supposed that a land development company, like Mr. Trunchard's in Buffalo, was seeking it, depending upon Erie to grow and absorb it after the war.

He comforted himself a little by promising to buy the lakefront no matter what. The three hundred and fifty dollars he would soon have free certainly ought to purchase the shore piece. Perhaps—sometime in the future, somehow—he could buy in that elm-shaded, pleasant knoll where he wanted to build the brick house modeled along the lines of the Buehler house on French Street.

Mr. Trunchard came to him two days later. He was satisfied with Azial Baxter as a credit risk and had the transfer papers drawn up. Chid signed, feeling nervous. He had never before signed his name to any legal paper except the articles of the *Blessed Cause*.

"All right, you got a good claim and I got the land," Chid said. "Now, who is this party that wants the property so badly?"

"A man named Shallus; has a mill in Waterford."

"John Shallus?"

"Yes. Do you know him, Mr. Alwyn?"

"Do I know him! Why, Mr. Trunchard, it's John Shallus who owes Azial Baxter the money to cover your claim."

"Great Jehovah! What—?"

Mr. Trunchard exploded in a burst of uncontrollable laughter. He held his fat belly and shook, like a jolly St. Nick. Chid joined, laughing at the little man as well as with him. He hadn't laughed like that in months.

"Just picture it," Mr. Trunchard gasped. "John Shallus, providing you with capital so you can hook him for a

profit! Mr. Alwyn, it's the grandest story on a Waterford man yet. Boy, oh boy, wait'll the deal goes through—Lord love us, Mr. Alwyn, what a tale for Erie ears! I never—"

Chid left him still guffawing, trying to regain his breath.

He was needed on the brig staging, something about cutting the quarter rail to accommodate the chaser guns. Profit or no profit, the building must go on. Without the fleet to make this region safe forever there would never be profit, never be a great city of Erie, or a shipyard, never opportunity, or a brick house like the Buehler house. . .

CHID was writing his letter to John Shallus, offering him the timber land for four hundred dollars, cash money, when Mrs. Baxter knocked at his office door. It was Sunday and a cool, overcast day. Work went on at the yard as always. The brigs appeared, to the inexpert eye, to be complete. Lower masts were in place, gunports fixed, the hulls painted a sombre black above the green waterline. But Chid knew the vast amount of work still to be done.

The din, the babble of voices, the pounding of hammers and the scream of rigging screws was nerve-racking. By these sounds alone, Chid knew exactly what was going on, even though in his shanty at the head of the ways.

Even now, writing with little relish to John Shallus, phrasing his proposition carefully, he was really working on stolen time.

"Azial," said Mrs. Baxter, settling herself into the one chair of the shanty, "is over to the commissary unloading. He fetched Quaker flour and some salt meat he couldn't abide to stay downwind of, it stank so. I rode up with him. Mr. Alwyn, the land company surveyor was working over a piece near us t'other day. He said, when he came over to borrow some milk, that you bought it. I reckon that makes us neighbors, don't you?"

"Well," Chid said, "I bought it blind, ma'm, to resell quick. I didn't know it was near your place."

"Right southeast; the creek divides us. It set Azial to thinking, Mr. Alwyn. He always wanted a saw mill on the creek. Not that he's complaining about the opportunity you threw his way. We'll be eternal grateful for that, Mr. Alwyn. We were both pretty discouraged about the time you come along with that government freighting. But what's to happen to freighting now with the navy boats almost built?"

"I wouldn't worry, ma'm. Azial's a prime boatman; he can always make a living on the river. Seems if Azial mentioned—meaning no offense, ma'm—that the saw mill idea was yours."

"I guess it was, Mr. Alwyn. Azial's a strong, willing man but I've always done the brain work for him. I let on that ideas are his; it seems fitter that way. Well, I was thinking, Mr. Alwyn, why couldn't you and us combine? We have the mill site, Azial's a freighter. You have timber, Pittsburgh wants it. It's a fine combination."

"And who'll supply the money to build the mill?"

"Why, Azial has cash coming above what he owes you, and I cal'ate a man like yourself might have some tucked away."

"I haven't a cent except what the gov'mint owes me, Mrs. Baxter. Nor have I the time."

"My Lord!" Azial's wife exclaimed. "Ain't you made nothing out of this, Mr. Alwyn? Why, it seems we ought to log off that place just to hunker up with you. You've been fair and square with us, more than that."

"I'll think it over, ma'm," Chid said and closed a book over the letter to John Shallus. "I want money. I need it. The work on the fleet will be easing off soon. Might be, between then and when I'll be free in August, we could turn a dollar. But I wouldn't want to see the fleet suffer."

"I GUESS it'll be in Cap'n Perry's hands before then, Mr. Alwyn. You let me look into this thing. Azial's found a man in Pittsburgh who will take all the lumber he can get. He'll even sell us a water saw and the machinery on easy credit, he's so anxious."

"You seem to have it all figured out, ma'm."

"I have. A sawyer has a respectable station in life, Mr. Alwyn. We're gentlefolks. Azial was a barrel stave manufacturer back in Peach Bottom on the Susquehanna. I had a slate-stone house and four slaves and accounts with a dozen Philadelphia merchants. But when the embargo hit the rum and molasses trade in eighteen seven we lost everything almost overnight. We came here to the only thing we had left, Azial's land donation for fighting with the Pennsylvania Rifles. We tried farming, which is the only thing a poor man can do and be a freeman. But it didn't go and Azial drifted to flat-boating. Now, I'd give ten years of my life to have him in a decent civilized business again."

Azial's wagon lumbered to a stop outside the shanty. Chid escorted Mrs. Baxter to it and shook hands with the big freighter.

"I'm doin' famous," Azial grinned shyly when Chid asked about business. "Got 'leven men workin' for me and two arks on the river all the time. We got to look over them boats soon, Chid. They're leakin' occasional, nuthin' serious but danged annoyin', times. Shallus loads down, nigh every trip, an' I'll have all he owes me by next week. The gov'-ment stuff's thinnin' out though; mebbe two-three weeks'll see it all carried here to Presque Isle. The Missus has some ideas then."

"So she told me, Azial."

"I'd admire powerful to associate ourselves with you, Chid. You been like a blessed angel to us. I'd be proud to have you share some profits."

"Thanks, Azial. When the fleet is finished I can think about myself."

Chid sat in the gloom on a bilge block at the ways head for a long time. He had taken to smoking a cob pipe lately and he found comfort in the sweet mild Erie-cured tobacco now.

Mrs. Baxter's idea had much promise. If the trees on that land he had bought were logged off as ship's timber the idea was bound to show profit. And as he had told her, he needed money, more money.

Suppose the company that had the option on the lake tract refused to sell him the shore piece? He'd have to offer to buy the whole tract—at a profit to them, of course. Suppose the land company failed to take up the option? It would then take a thousand dollars to buy the whole tract. And he had, if the government did not delay paying him the money due him still longer, less than four hundred.

He had no difficulty in analyzing his problems clearly. It was not unlike planning a complicated bit of carpentry for the ships. All the if, buts and whens must be weighed and considered thoroughly, given their proper value, brought into focus.

"TOMORROW," Mr. Brown said, "we are going to launch the brigs. I had hopes that Mr. Carmody would be well enough to make the last inspection. He isn't, and I'm asking you to do it, Chid."

Chid felt the honor keenly. Upon his word two great ships, certified worthy by himself, would plunge into the lake.

"How early tomorrow?" Chid asked.

"As early as possible; you can inspect today. The wind is north, from off the lake, and I think it will hold. You'll have the deepest water with such a wind."

"All right," Chid said. "You watch, Mr. Brown, say an hour after sun-up. I reckon the fleet'll be ready for fighting right soon now. I was wondering what the next job is."

"I suppose," Noah Brown said, with a smile, "that I could let you go like the others. But I'm not going to. I have plans for you, Chidsy, saying you are willing when the time comes."

"It depends on what they are."

"Of course it does. On the last day of July you will be a journeyman shipwright; we'll talk about it then. Meantime, there are still a few things to be done on the brigs after they are launched."

"The supplies are almost all here now," said Chid proudly.

"Thanks to you and Mr. Baxter. Chidsy, I want to talk to you about that requisition. The Congress or some busybody in the Navy Department has seen fit to challenge the price you paid for

the arks. I'm defending your action. But there'll be delay, I'm afraid."

"They were cheap," Chid said, suddenly angry.

"Cheap at any price, we needed them so badly," Mr. Brown agreed. "The army people also feel that inasmuch as your Indians were not enlisted and did not take the oath they are not entitled to pay. I'm sorry, Chidsy. That's—well, Washington. I'll fight to the death for you and I have no doubt we'll collect in time."

"Sometimes I feel's if I'd been a plain damn fool."

"I don't, Chidsy, and I've advanced thousands and thousands. I'd do it again tomorrow."

"Well, I don't reckon I would, Mr. Brown. But it won't make any difference." Chid said, not wanting to talk about it, "Just let me get those brigs launched. I know what to do about all this."

"Nothing rash, Chidsy?"

"Nothing that anybody else isn't doing," Chid said defiantly and hurried to the Cascade yard.

He was absorbed in his inspection of the two brigs all the rest of the day. They were beautifully and well built. Live oak sheathing protected them from beneath the water-line to the rail cap. Each brig was pierced for twenty guns, though the guns had not yet arrived. The upper masts and yards lay on the smooth white deck ready for hoisting aloft, almost completely rigged. The strong delightful odor of Stockholm tar, taken from the Britisher that he and Nez and Antoine had captured, filled the still, warm air. A handy-billy snaked gun-carriages and water butts and hatch covers and gratings up a skid-plank from the side of the launching ways to the deck, and over the whole scene there was a gay holiday spirit.

"When you leavin', Chid?" a carpenter asked, oiling his tools.

"When Perry accepts the ships, I s'ppose. Three-four weeks, maybe."

"Hell, me an' the York state fellers leave directly after the launchin'. Brown's cuttin' down on the gang."

"Where you heading?"

"Dunno. The coast, I reckon. They's scads o' buildin' goin' on there, I hear. You ought to get in on it—easy work an' damn good pay, not like here."

"I don't want to leave particular."

"You don't! God, I hated ev'ry secunt o' this. Worst is, I don't see no damn sense in the hull thing. Lookit that bay."

"What's the matter with it?"

"It's lowerin'. Inches a day—Christ knows but hosses'll have to drag these ships inter the lake yet. How's Perry figurin' to clear the bar?"

"Light, of course."

"Aye; light, you say. That means without guns nor shot nor fightin' gear. What's to happen when the ships get t'other side with no guns, an' the god-damn enemy's waitin' fer 'em?"

"There's depth over the bar; there will be for some time, I reckon."

"How long? D'you or Perry or Brown know?"

"Nope."

"Well, then, like I say, what's the sense?"

"You talk like a Tory. Perry and Noah Brown have it all figured out. The way supplies are coming in now, they'll have these brigs ready in a couple of weeks; long before the lake goes down or the British organize a squadron. Their *Detroit* ain't even launched yet."

"All right. Say they have it figured out—but damned if I got as much faith as they have. Where's the crew to man these here ships? I lay there ain't three hundred in the barracks."

"Oh, they'll come," Chid said. "You keep working even if it is your last day."

He left the man. His words were too near the truth to be cheerful. Chid wanted the fleet to be everything it was expected to be. But he could do nothing for it except what he was doing; keep faithfully at the building and do as he was ordered in the terse notes that came from Mr. Brown's chamber, and now too from George Carmody, who had been established on a couch in front of the Cascade joiner left.

HE WAS not worried about the lake level. Dan Dobbins, back from Black Rock, had been exploring the bar for the best passage, and had reported that, un-

less the lake dropped to unheard-of Summer levels, the ships could be taken over.

The plan was to reduce the weight in each broadside to four guns and to carry only enough shot for serving them ten times each. The schooners and—if Perry's attack on Fort George proved successful—the Niagara river vessels as well, were to anchor in a protecting cordon in the lake beyond the bar to hold off any attacking British squadron. Chid noted with satisfaction that many new earthworks had been dug on the outer peninsula. These waited now only for guns. Perhaps Azial Baxter was poling them up the Allegany this moment. Real Taylor, who was not an optimist, had pronounced the protection of these batteries sufficient, and declared that a gun on a steady land platform was worth three on a rolling ship.

Dobbins believed the bar would permit the passage of the brigs if they drew seven feet or less. Chid, scaling the building model, found that their designed draught was a trifle better than nine feet. It would not be difficult to strip them of enough unimportant gear, including some ballast and all the spare yards and spars and stores, to achieve a seven-foot draught.

Work ceased on the two brigs at sundown. It was odd, this night, watching so many of the men fold their aprons and stow the oiled tools in the great chests burned with the inscription *Noah Brown, New York.* Chid completed his inspection in the warm Summer dusk. They were good ships; as good as New England men could build, as good as his own *Ariel.* He told it so to George Carmody, and Carmody, nodding, thanked him for taking over his job.

CHAPTER XXV

SHOT AND POWDER FOR THE FLEET

NEZ swung into his path from the martingale rigging of the brig which Perry had selected to be his flagship. He reached for his shoulder knife and solemnly cut

Mrs. Slinker knelt beside a small rounded mound on the barren sand dunes of Misery Bay.

his leather apron into shreds. He had again been assigned to a carpenter's gang after it became apparent that the surrounding country had been stripped of everything of use to the fleet.

"I been lookin' for'ard to this for some time," Nez said. "Ain't it funny, Chid, I mean waitin' on doin' it when I could-'ave done it anytime? Trouble was, I didn't want to. Somehow it's all different now. The job's done, so far as we can do it, an' it sort of gives a man a freedom."

"You're finished, too, Nez?"

"Sure thing. So's Antoine. Chid, I wish you was comin' with us."

"Are you heading back to Portersville, Nez?"

"Not me! You forget we're in trouble on the coast, Chid? Antwine an' me is aimin' to meet up with the Green Mountains an' his Otter Crick. We'll go east with the gang to the Genesee an' then to Albany. From there we'll bushwhack. If they been huntin o' us in that region, it's done by now an' we'll be safe's a pair o' mushrats under ice. We'd both like to have you join us, Chid."

"I'm staying on. For good, Nez. Didn't I mention the shipyard?"

"Certain, you did. But I didn't believe it."

"Well, you can now. Nez, I always figured you and Antoine would kind of be with me in it."

"What in tarnation could we do, Chid? Godamighty, you know I don't like the trade—it's just a go-by for me, suthin' to do whilst I'm waitin' for suthin' else to do. Antwine, he never would have come savin' for that trouble."

"I suppose," Chid said. "Nez, don't get drunk tonight."

"Huh! Won't I, though. We're goin' to drink Erie dry's a witch's soul. Man, that's freedom. We kind o' earned it, Chid. I feel proud as hell o' what I did here; it'll let me live with myself for a long time to come. It's up to Perry an' his boys now."

"I reckon, Nez. A man can't be expected to do more'n his duty."

Chid walked to the village in the twilight with a feeling of dejection and loneliness. He felt some better after he had stopped at Mr. Trunchard's house and sold him his claim against the government for exactly half price. "It's a handsome interest," said Mr. Trunchard, "even if I have to wait a year like you say. I'm satisfied, Mr. Alwyn."

"You told the story on Shallus yet?"

"Oh, no. I'm saving it."

"Well," Chid said as he left, "if I were you I wouldn't mention it."

He had a noggin of rum at Stone's and called for a quill and ink. His hasty letter to Azial Baxter and his wife was short. The money enclosed would do the real talking. Chid wrote:

> Go ahead. I'll be down first chance I get to show you how to cut the trees. The arks are mine until they are paid for by the government. I contribute them and the timber. It is getting terribly dry up here but I think that we can send most of what we cut before the river drops too low.

At the shanty he tore up the unfinished letter to John Shallus.

He could hear the celebrating carpenters whooping it up at Stone's. He would almost have liked to be with them but his head ached like sin tonight. He wondered if he had a touch of sun.

But he remembered suddenly that there had been no sun that day.

MRS. SLINKER knelt silently beside a small rounded mound on the barren sand dune above the placid waters of Misery Bay. Sand spurs and wire grass crept from the nearby sparse dune growth, covering the raw yellow earth with harsh, pale green tracery. An unpainted wooden cross, branded with the initials T. S., stood at the head of the rounded grave. Tonk's mother did not know that it was a piece of the *Ariel*, that her son himself had engraved those stark silent letters.

The long trip from Portersville had been terrifying. She had been alone, as she now would be for the rest of her life. Her husband had died on an English prison hulk after being impressed from a New London-China packet. Tonk had been all that remained of him.

Mrs. Slinker prayed in a faint weary murmur, her purse clutched tightly in her clasped hands, her eyes closed, facing

the great blue lake. She did not see the three sails that burst suddenly from the bay behind her and raced madly in chase of another larger sail that had come winging from the north. Once she was faintly aware of cheering and the booming of cannon in some distant far-off place, across the water. But she prayed on. There was so much that she wanted to tell God about Tonk.

After a long while she dried her eyes. She replaced the wet handkerchief in the purse.

Mrs. Slinker rose slowly to her feet, a heavy, large-footed woman, perhaps once pretty. She did not cry as she walked down the hill to the shore where the boat waited.

Antoine helped her into the rowing gig and manned the oars without speaking.

"I—I had to see—where he was," said Mrs. Slinker, almost beligerently after a while.

"Yes, ma'm," Antoine nodded gravely. "Ah, t'ink Ah un'erstan', me, ma'm. Tonk she was goo' boy, Ah t'ink."

Antoine rowed rapidly. It was almost two miles across the bay. Mrs. Slinker sat motionless and alone on the stern thwart. She looked back toward Misery Bay only once. They landed at the stone mole.

"Ah t'ink Cap Dobbins she sail to Black Rock tonight, ma'm," Antoine said, helping her out. "Is better you sail wit' she."

"No," said Mrs. Slinker. "I spent every copper I have in the world to come up here. I must find work in Erie."

"Bah Gar," Antoine snorted, "is bad bad place here. War, ma'm, she come, ver' bad war wit' beeg battle wit' British, wit' tam Injun!"

"I know," Mrs. Slinker smiled quietly, "but Tonk would like to have me near him, Mr. Marestier. Do you think Mr. Stone might be needing a kitchen maid?"

"She better was, ma'm, she better was," Antoine replied softly. "Ah don' reckon Ah know what de boys she do on dat Stone she don' fin' you good work, ma'm."

Chid was on the road to the Donation District and his timber tract by seven o'clock. It was Sunday, the first workless Sabbath to be declared since the commencement of the building of the fleet. The Navy carpenter rates had the vessels well in hand; Chid's service now was mainly in supervising their labor. The apprentices ran from ship to ship, finishing up the last of the details. They were staving the inboard side of the bulwark rails with live oak, giving real protection to the gunners. The *Porcupine* had lost an entire gun crew in one of the numerous brushes with the British patrol because of inadequate armor of her bulwarks. It would not happen again.

Moses had declared the Niagara ships ready for the lake and returned, with Mary and the Commodore's sister, to Sacketts' Harbor. Word had come that the Ontario forces were actually moving, sweeping westward on the lake toward Fort George. The two new brigs lay at the fitting-out mole inside the bar, their sparring growing daily. A man could begin to understand them now, see for himself their formidable grimness, their purpose.

Chid heard the bell of the Catholic Mission in Erie toll the mass. He walked rapidly. He still had that headache, that annoying tiredness. Mrs. Baxter's short note had said that the water mill was operating, reminded him that the cutting of the trees depended upon him. He paid his copper at the toll house.

He met the first team of Azial Baxter's train on the road near the Lytle farm. The Pennsylvania Brigade had disbanded. The four-month enlistments were up, and the soldiers, weary of dusty drilling and short rations, had struggled home to old Pennsylvania. The train had no guns this time, but was heavily laden with round and bar shot and, at last, several tons of kegged black powder.

"Show 'em," Chid told the lead driver, "to every man you see. Make 'em count the items you got."

CHID tramped on to the Baxter land. The house was empty but he followed a new well-worn path over a rolling intervale and came out at the sawmill site. The rig was a Duquesne piston saw, with a wooden beam, belted to the oak overshot waterwheel that turned slow-

ly under the fall of clear spring water from the new sluiceway.

Mrs. Baxter, in denim pants and a sunbonnet, superintended the mill. She offered Chid spring-cooled ginger beer, then introduced him to the foreman.

"This is Mr. Tarnip; Mr. Alwyn."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Alwyn. Bugle Tarnip's the name, jes' Bugle, you like. Do we get at that lesson, Mr. Alwyn?"

"Come on."

Chid's land was good. The trees were not crowded. They had grown tall and straight, in the lee of a gentle hill that divided the twisting north wind. Bugle Tarnip was a good logger, an Adirondack man, sixteen years in the Pennsylvania forests, and he learned well. They reached the turnpike boundary late in the afternoon.

"Mrs. Baxter, she allows to cut for ship timber first; then salvage for house boards and such. Is that agreeable?"

"A-yep. But carry the ship timber down to Pittsburgh first, that's the present high market. What's she paying you, Mr. Tarnip?"

"Eighteen a month, plus keep. Have a drink?"

"A big one. I kind of feel rotten all over." Chid drank the fiery whiskey, hardly feeling its flame. He felt hot inside, not only from the potent liquor but as if from a fire kindled deep in his belly. His head throbbed.

Bugle Tarnip laughed. "I guess you boys had one hell of a farewell party at Erie, hey? I wisht I'd been on hand."

"That's it, one hell of a party, Bugle. I got to get on."

Chid could not recollect the return journey. He shucked his shirt, walking along the hot dusty road toward Erie, grateful for the heat of the warm sunshine. But hot and sweating, he would suddenly feel a clammy coldness creep over him and hastily put the shirt on again. Some place along the road, past the Baxter clearing, a three-oxen team and a wagon overtook him, going downhill.

"Chid! Hell to Betsy, it's good to see you, Chid."

It was Azial Baxter, bound to Erie from the ark landing with the last of the powder and shot. He drew up at the foot of the hill and invited Chid to climb on.

"Chid, this was a fust-rate trip. Light stuff, mostly, lighter'n cannons anyway 'twas, an' the boys made swift time. Missus cal'ates we make seventy dollars this week. Ain't that a caution o' money for six days' work? Dang it, we're never goin' to get shut o' bein' obliged to you, Chid . We ain't; an' that's gospel! I jest see Missus, an' Bugle Tarnip reported he's onto yer marked trees an' fellin' 'em rapid."

"Who's Bugle Tarnip?"

"Shucks, Chid! You jes' met o' him. He's doin' the loggin' off fer us. Tarnation, Chid, you jes' learned him."

"I recollect," Chid mumbled. His insides seemed to be burning. His whole body ached and throbbed with a withering pain.

"Four more trips an' we'll have the gov'mint stuff all hauled. You got to lay up the arks before you tote much timber, Chid. They need seam pluggin' here an' yon', an' the groundin' strakes must be rubbed complete off'n 'em. Chid, you stand to make a hell of a purse o' money on our deal. Me an' Missus is glad fer you. We don't begrudge. . . Chid!"

Chid had hung over the side of the wagon and vomited. Azial's great arm reached out, sliding under his shoulders for support. Chid was white. He slumped against Azial, struggling close to the body warmth of the huge man, chilled again to shivering.

"Hell to Betsy!" Azial muttered in amazement. "An' I never smelled the likker till this minute. Boy, I thought you was behavin' odd. Giddap!" he clucked to the lumbering oxen. "Git on, you lazy cre'turs, you. I got to get Chid to Erie a'fore he ruint's hisself with his hull future."

"Take me to Stone's," Chid said weakly.

"The hell I will, Chid. You had enough likker."

HE LAID Chid in the box on a blanket pad spread over the kegged powder. He reckoned Chid was horribly drunk; the reek of powerful liquor was heavy about

him. Azial reached Erie at dusk. He cut around the settlement and drove straight to the Cascade shanty office. Nobody answered his knock. After a cautious peering into the sash and the dusk shadows about, he timidly opened the door. Then he carried Chid in from the wagon and laid him, with a shy tenderness, on the hard bunk.

"You'll be sober come mornin', boy," Azial whispered softly. "Dang it, I wisht Missus was to hand; this ain't my line. There you be, Chid. I hope sincere you won't get in no trouble over this."

Azial drove his outfit to the unloading platform of the brick magazine of the naval stores yard on the shore, and late that night reached his own fireside. In the morning he was off again by ark to Pittsburgh.

Neither Azial nor Chid had seen the letter that lay, unopened, upon the board table. It was dirty and pawed, and the handwriting labored, as if written under a sputtering candle by a person unaccustomed to handling a quill. The letter read:

> Dear Mister Alwyn:
>
> I write to lett you know what Moses Leet hollered afore he was took off. He hollered, lett Chidsy Alwyn know for Godds sake. We was fellen trees in the woods astern Sacketts then. Mary was along with us pickin berry and Moses he was tallyin and thar they war. They was British marines and Indians. I am shot. They skipped me but I am not ded and I hear Moses Leet. They went away on a yawlboat and Mister Sears the boson ses they are tooken to detroit to work on the British vessels. I do not know. Thar was 6 on them and Mary. She was not capchered. But she went on count Moses is week and is like to get sick agin. They went acrost Ontario like to the west. I bare yu no illwill Mister Alwyn, I reckond you and Mister Nott was on the *Blessed Cause* schunner. Moses he swore me not to tell and I am not that kind. yur friend Livy Brackett.

Mr. Knell, the blacksmith, who had been put on the Navy payroll to make up the great variety of gun carriage iron needed for the brigs, found Chid in the office about noon the following day. He took one look at him, and sent his striker for Doctor Parsons. By daylight no one could mistake Chid's trouble. The surgeon had Chid carried to the pest chambers over the Erie Hotel tap room within the hour. Chid was desperately sick and unconscious when Mr. Knell and his striker carried him up the three flights of narrow box stairs to the pest chamber. Dr. Parsons, shucking his gold-braided uniform jacket, prepared for a long seige. He had seen over two hundred cases in the last months, and no two were exact in symptoms or reaction to treatment. But he recognized Chid's case as critical and he called for emetics and purgatives, his first attack always.

"Has the lad been working in the lake rot, Mr. Knell?"

"Dunno, sir." Mr. Knell touched his forelock respectfully with a charcoal pocked hand. "Ordinary, no, sir. He's on the hull. He goes inter the woods sometimes though, sir."

"Yistady morning," the striker offered timidly, "I see Mr. Alwyn fair up to his gut in the lake. Fixin' the brig rudder chains, he was, sir."

"Ha! Now, we're getting a history. He inhaled likely. Yes; yes. He laid all night alone with no care. He tried to dose himself with spirits. That's it, Mr. Knell. We've got a serious case here. Can you men help? The cure will have to be drastic. I hate it as much as an amputation."

Doctor Parsons called for hot water in the yard barrel. While it was being heated by Mr. Stone's redemptioner, the doctor undressed Chid and wrapped him in a blanket. He then melted a cake of beeswax and plugged Chid's ears and nostrils. Mr. Knell carried him, like a sack of grain, to the barrel of hot water.

"Ordinarily I'd precribe three and three," the doctor said, his brow furrowed. "M'm . . . swamp and lake fumes both; a nasty combination indeed. Make it five and five, Mr. Knell. The cold first, please."

Mr. Knell and the striker plunged Chid into the cold water barrel, submerging him until he could barely breathe. Doctor Parsons, reaching into the slimy, previously used water, felt for Chid's pulse. It was a professional gesture of little value, and in a weary, helpless way the doctor knew it. "Very well" he said after two minutes had

passed, "now the hot, men. Handsome, please."

Chid was soused into the barrel of hot water; then again into the cold. At the seventh plunge Dr. Parsons stopped it. There was almost no pulse. He shook his head and ordered Chid again to the bed in the pest chamber.

"I dare not do more," Parsons muttered as if arguing with himself. "To let blood now would finish the boy. I wish to God man was vouchsafed the same knowledge of medicine that he is of war."

"Can I do anythin' more, sir?" Mr. Knell whispered.

"Yes," the doctor said quietly. "While you're forging your goddam guns, you can pray for Mr. Alwyn."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ENEMY ATTACKS

THE form of the lake fever which Chid had contracted was known as intermittent fever, the most dreaded of the several forms that the plague took. It was severe and dangerous always, but, as its virulence grew less intense with the passage of time, the disease staggered its attack, alternating the days. One day its effect was mild, lulling the victim into a sense of returning health; then on the following day, it rallied and attacked with all its symptoms of extreme chills and fever and terrible deliriums. But it was many weeks before the malady definitely proved itself of the intermittent type.

Chid was taken by the lake fever on the twenty-fifth of May. He had no recollection at all of time until mid-June. One day he awoke from a black dreamless sleep, near nightfall, with the sound of guns booming in his ears. At first the reports only pounded on his brain with meaningless dull thuds superimposed upon the constant throbbing of his head.

He lay on a single rope-webbed cot on a shuck-filled mattress in a small garret room. Alongside was another cot, empty. A painted tin coach trunk stood on the floor, beneath a window that gave a view of the expanse of Presque Isle and the great lake beyond. The room was stifling hot, but Chid's one sensation, as he opened his eyes to rationality for the first time in more than three weeks, was one of bitter damp chill. He shivered with it, unable to control himself, and with an effort that took all his strength pulled the quilt tightly into his neck. His exertions rang a small brass bell that had been fastened to the bed ropes. He heard its tinkle, like a far-off waterfall, without interest. Only the thud of the guns pounded upon his dulled senses, and he cried out against the pain of listening to them.

Mrs. Baxter came cautiously into the room. She bustled about Chid, making him comfortable, her sharp alert eyes worried.

"Be still, dearie," Mrs. Baxter whispered softly. "Guns will always rouse you men. There now. 'Tis nothing. Go to sleep, Mr. Alwyn. When the doctor comes, he'll say what's to do next. You ain't stirred so much since Azial found you were here. If the doctor'd only stop lettin' your blood, dearie, I swear I'd have you rational in no time. But I s'pose he knows best. Now sleep, Mr. Alwyn."

Mrs. Baxter stole softly out of the room. The guns still boomed. Sometimes with the sharpest of the reports the glass sash in the room rattled, and against the panes there darted from time to time reflections of thin red tongues of flame.

Chid was not to know that day that what he was hearing was the final action in the campaign against Fort George. Winging up the Erie shore on the freshening night wind, their quartermasters searching anxiously for the Presque Isle bar ranges, were the five warships that had been bottled in the Niagara. Behind them, spitting angrily from bog chasers, pounded the British fleet.

Chauncey and Lewis' army several weeks ago had cleared the Niagara region of the British in a fierce bloody attack on Fort George, the key stronghold. Fort Erie, as the British had retreated to Queenland, had been evacuated. The whole Niagara frontier was in the possession of the Americans; the enemy line of supply and communication to De-

troit had been driven far to the north, into the remote wildernesses of Canada. If it could now be severed, at the water link through Lake Erie, the offensive would be placed in the hands of the waiting western army of Harrison, and the vast Michigan lands, the valley of the Mississippi, indeed the continent to the Spanish states and the Pacific, would be preserved for the Union. More than ever before, the responsibility for success rested upon Captain Perry and his still unready fleet.

The task of getting the freed ships into the lake had been no easy one. For two weeks Perry and his inadequate naval crews and growling hired teamsters had warped the vessels through the swift racing currents of the Niagara River. Only four days ago the squadron had finally assembled in the lake and, buffeted by head winds and heavy seas, commenced the tedious beat along the south shore of Erie. Until dusk this very night the captain had eluded the British squadron searching for him.

The enemy was in his wake now, close-hauled on the full breeze that swept from the watery west. The racing squadrons plunged onward through the last of the daylight. The bar of Presque Isle was the goal. Inside the bay Perry's new squadron would be safe.

The watchers on Erie shore that night could but guess as to the progress of the desperate race. The staggered gunfire and the sudden tiny blazes of red in the darkness might be from either fleet. The cannonading drew nearer, until it was suddenly echoing against the shore buildings and the steep clay banks of the lake shore. It filled some hearts with pride and with sudden belated resolution and some it filled with fear and dismay. Already the laden wagons were again creaking south along the Waterford Turnpike, piled high with household goods and with children, the stock pacing the tailboards with anxious looks back at Erie.

MRS. BAXTER, bathing Chid with vinegar as she had just been instructed by Dr. Parsons, kept her eyes glued to the window. In the large main pest chamber adjoining, those patients who could filled the window openings, the Navy men sniffing the night like hound-dogs for the whiff of powder and damning their luck to be beached at such a time. Behind them the surgeon's mates packed handbags and medicines. If the British succeeded in closing with Perry and followed him through the channel, the ranges of which his course would reveal, the order stood to evacuate. Wagons and hitched horses, their ears laid back against the gunfire, waited before Mr. Stone's taproom. The drivers, this night, did not congregate in the bar but remained soberly upon the boxes.

"Alwyn," Dr. Parsons pronounced, shaking his head sadly, "can't be moved, Mrs. Baxter. No matter what, he'll have to remain here."

"Alone?"

"Of course alone, ma'm. I'll leave written instructions to the British surgeon should it be necessary to leave him behind."

"It won't be necessary, sir," Mrs. Baxter replied with an odd choke in her voice. "I reckon I wouldn't leave him."

"No," the doctor said, "I reckon you wouldn't. You've been more than a mother to him, Mrs. Baxter. Are you related?"

"No, sir. He's just a good man. He's kept his word with my husband and me, and he's treated us fair and honest. It's more than we've ever had before. We're the kind that value it, sir. It's why I came when I heard he was sick."

"I'd say," Parsons said quietly, "you rather deserve whatever good fortune Alwyn has brought you. Good night, ma'm."

Added to the gunfire now there was the ragged crack of musket shots. To the watching Navy men, it meant that the ships were within range of marine fire from the tops. Perry would have to slide inside the harbor or turn and give battle in minutes. The flashes now, and the close, space-filling booming of the long guns, were almost abreast of the town.

There came suddenly a cheer from the windows of the pest chamber. Off on the black lake the red flashes stabbed the night now like a dense swarm of

fireflies. The pursued squadron had crossed the bar, quickly spread fanwise and rounded to. Perry's five ships now lay with luffing sails in the calm bay pouring broadside after broadside into the surprised enemy. Hastily the British ships killed their way to avoid stranding. As they came about, they received the full weight of Perry's careful fire into their exposed topsides. Realizing the trap, they quickly scudded off before the wind under hastily organized return fire, presenting only their stern to the defenders; and as they did so, running parallel with the shore and the peninsula, the shore batteries opened a rapid murderous long-gun fire and made the rout complete.

"Mr. Alwyn," Mrs. Baxter whispered softly, "I reckon we won't be alone."

Chid's sleep became untroubled and quiet. There was no longer that awful pounding, that terrific paining sound as if guns were firing. He felt cool now, not chilled.

He awoke in the early morning with a clear awareness that was satisfyingly fresh and strange. His vision focused on the bay beyond the window. It sparkled bright and living under a gentle crisp north wind, and under the nigh shore, swinging to taut chain cables, were not five but ten ships, and from the main gaff of each flew the American ensign.

He felt light and spirited, like getting up. His mind was clear and sharp and suddenly filled with the recollection of his affairs. He had choppers in the woods and a mill sawing busily. Azial Baxter would be hauling stores on the arks that he owned. Mr. Brown would be expecting him to be on one of the ships; many shot racks were still unmade and Dr. Parsons had requisitioned for a large oaken table with leather straps to be through-bolted to the deck in the center of the cockpit floor of each brig. Chid had, somehow, to burn a late candle and write to Mary, to make their plans for meeting, when his apprenticeship was ended. And, while his hand was in it, to accept the offer of Ballston & Adams, the timber agents in Pittsburgh, to handle the shipment of choice air-seasoned ship timber due to leave Waterford on his own arks about August the first. There was a matter to be taken care of on the coast, too, an ancient danger that he had grown to be forgetful of but which, in his heart, he knew would always threaten the liberty that would be his when he became at last a freeman and ruled over that prosperous dream-shipyard up the bay.

Without willing it, he struggled to get from his bed. The bell tinkled on the bed rope under him. Mrs. Baxter, looking sleepy, opened the door.

"Ma'm," Chid said, "ma'm, I want to get up."

"No," Mrs. Baxter whispered. "This is fine, Mr. Alwyn, fine; but it's your good day, like the doctor said. Tomorrow you'll be down again. Mr. Alwyn, do be still, please you've a neighbor now. He's a very sick man."

Chid turned his head slowly to the other bed. Wrapped in quilts to the throat, the perspiration trickling in shiny beads from his pale wan face, was Captain Perry.

ON HIS good days Chid never tired of resting back against his straw pillow and watching the fleet at battle practice. It consisted now of three brigs and seven schooners. Its tonnage and weight of broadside metal almost matched the British fleet, even including the new *Detroit*, which was being rushed to completion by enforced captive labor.

He liked to watch the sham battles. Each day three or four of the schooners slipped their cables and, spreading their white wings, maneuvered about the bay in sail-handling drill.

They fought innumerable battles for position with each other, each trying always for the weather gauge. When any two got within range of each other, sheets would be let fly; they would stand up into the wind, the bulwark ports lift ominously, and through them appear the black muzzles of the guns. The guns were never fired. Powder was too scarce for that. But the gun captain would blow a whistle, its sound reaching Chid as the silvery muted call of a bay bird's, now that his window was permitted to remain open, and the crews, accepting it as the touch of the match, would run

the piece in handsomely, sponge, reload, and have it run out waiting for the whistle, in less than a minute.

Sometimes the schooners would signal by flag hoist to the watch tower on the peninsula, and if no enemy sail was on the horizon, which was not often, move into the broad lake itself for the maneuvers. Chid noticed that even they with their light draught did not cross the bar any more. They worked carefully through the winding channel, searching for that one deep safe path. The lake had dropped fearfully. On a calm noon day, from his window, Chid could plainly see the shadows of the ships on the sandy bottom. As they moved under the light Summer winds, the vessels were followed always by this shadow, like a shark trailing them in the cool depths.

Often, when the vessels practiced on the lake, the watch gun on the cape would bellow, and like ducks alarmed by the hunter's musket, the fleet would tack smartly and race for the protection of the bay. Then the play would cease. The yawl boats and punts that hung always astern of the three brigs would fill with the crews that had been fitting out; they would pass swiftly to the schooners, and Chid would hear the harsh scream of the battle rattle as general quarters were taken in earnest. Without anything having been changed, the schooners would suddenly become grim and lethal, and slither to their stations in support of the shore batteries.

But the British never closed for a real attack. They seemed to be reconnoitering, to be watching the progress of the shipbuilding, and remained always out of gun range. Once, when the British observation force numbered only two small schooners, Chid's own *Ariel* broke from the formation like an impatient child, and gave spirited chase. She sailed deep into the afternoon sun, spitting fire from under the press of white canvas, and when she returned at dusk it was with ragged shot holes in her bulwarks and her bowsprit splintered. The *Ariel*, Mrs. Baxter reported jubilantly when she came to settle him that night, had shot the foremast out of one of the Britishers and smashed the stern battery of the other, but, darting in for the kill, had discovered two of the heavy ships of the enemy standing toward her, and had run for cover.

Chid took the doughty little *Ariel's* attack as a personal triumph. She was to him a living thing, created from nothing but an idea and hard work and his own pride in his trade. He could pick her out from the fleet at any time. There was a jaunty rake to her masts, a smooth even sheen to her black topsides that bespoke perfect workmanship in the frame and plank beneath. He felt about her, he guessed, as Captain Perry felt about the number two brig. Number two, he had told Chid, for no real reason save that he somehow had faith in her, was to be his flagship. He had asked permission from the Navy Department to name her *Lawrence* in honor of his old friend, Captain James Lawrence, who was now roving the North Atlantic in command of the great frigate-of-the-line *Chesapeake*.

Perry's attack of the fever was light, and he was on the mend long before Chid. Dr. Parsons believed his collapse due mainly to over-exertion on behalf of the fleet. But, nevertheless, he confined him to his bed.

The room had become Perry's office. Document-littered tables surrounded his bed, and his brass-bound rosewood writing case was always near at hand. The papers and books and letters became untidy piles about him, overflowing onto the one chair reserved for the visitors who must see him. Noah Brown, who could navigate slowly now with the aid of a stout hickory cane, came frequently. He had delayed his departure for Lake Champlain, where he was to build some vitally important naval ships, and undertake the completion of the brigs for the captain.

For both sides the race was one of completing the fighting ships. Neither dared risk a decisive engagement until the fleets were matched, and up until now it had been a contest of shipbuilders. But there was no more time for new building. Summer was passing. The British had a huge army in Detroit and the Americans had one equally large to the south of them. Whichever side could first destroy the opposition's supply and

communications lines would gain the offensive and carry the war into the other's territory and to victory.

CHAPTER XXVII

DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP!

LIEUTENANT ELLIOT, who was second in command of the fleet and commander of the brig that had been named the *Niagara*, was a frequent visitor. To him Perry had assigned the task of training the crews. Elliot was a defeatist. In spite of a brilliant record, which included the original organization of the Black Rock navy yard and the capture of the *Caledonia* from the British, Elliot regarded every measure of preparation for the coming battle for the lake as hopeless.

"We have so far," Elliot remarked heavily one day in Chid's hearing, "three hundred and ten seamen, sir; only enough to man the schooners."

"We have a civil reserve, Lieutenant. You must remember it."

"I do, sir. No man ever could forget that rabble. They—they are worthless."

"No man is worthless," Perry said softly. "You forget, Lieutenant, that every man has a heart. All we can do is to train and train. The smell of powder and the scream of a ball does wonders for courage and will."

"Lieutenant Packett of the *Ariel* has enlisted forty-two men for the Naval Brigade, sir," Elliot said stiffly, "mostly from hereabouts."

"Excellent." The captain smiled. "Now send him east, Elliot, to Black Rock and Geneva and Utica. Commodore Chauncey can't have taken every last man. We need eight hundred men; but, damn, with the ships so nearly complete and the British spoiling so for a fight, I'll engage with half that number."

Perry was worried about only one thing, and when Chid was sitting up and opportunity afforded, Perry would sometimes discuss it with him.

It was the lake level. He watched it like a hawk. Real Taylor had brought a telescope from Perry's sea chest in the rude after-cabin under the flapship's quarterdeck, and he anxiously studied the slowly widening shore many times each day.

"Captain Dobbins," Perry said once, talking more to himself than to Chid, "reports that the main channel is less than ten feet deep, much lower than is usual at this time of the year. But I've noticed that the lake rises after a period of northerly winds. Now, Chid, I presume that we can unburden enough to clear."

"To seven feet," Chid said. "Less and you'd run the risk of capsizing."

"The brigs will need eight feet at least then. I'm praying desperately that we'll have that much depth and a north wind when we're ready to cross the bar."

"The ships are almost ready, sir."

"Aye, the ships are, Chid. It's we who are not. I begged Commodore Chauncey to spare me sufficient men to go out and meet the enemy. If we had the manpower, I swear, I'd cross within the week."

"Cross and anchor behind the schooners, sir."

"It's a risky chance, I'm afraid. We've got to enter the lake fighting. The minute we make the first move, there will be signal smoke behind us to bring the British. The fight will be in sight of Erie, I believe."

"And the chances, sir?"

The captain studied the distances for a long moment before answering. "Good for victory," he said finally. "We match the enemy almost exactly. But we have something that the British do not have, Chid; something that, in the last analysis, wins battles and wars. Our men fight for their homes and their dear ones; for their lives and freedom and liberty. Our enemies fight they know not why; for obscure reasons beyond even their commanders. It's the essential difference between us. It's the intangible that brings victory in spite of—"

"Chauncey and Congress, official stupidity and greed."

"It would be unworthy of me to say it, Chid," Perry said shortly, and fell silent.

But Chid knew that he worried always about the lake. He himself took to

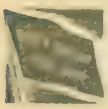
watching its level anxiously. Unless the fleet was manned and trained at once, it was liable to find itself landlocked within Presque Isle Bay until the next Spring. The whole effort would then have been useless; the whole frontier would again fall to the British, and, strengthened and freshened, the enemy would the next time make good their threat of invasion and division.

But such conversations were possible only on Chid's good days. After each one, during the night, would come again the dreadful chills and fevers and all the next day he would toss and writhe in the throes of the terrific headaches and the searing muscular pains. Toward evening the attack would wear off and, weak and exhausted, he would find good dreamless sleep at last. The next morning he would be without pain and eager to return to the managing of his affairs.

"You just squeezed through, Alwyn," Dr. Parsons would reply to his eternal requests to be dismissed; "just, my boy. It was out of my hands. Providence, I reckon, lad, isn't through with you yet. Ask me tomorrow, my boy."

Chid would grin wryly. Tomorrow was always the bad day. He wouldn't even feel like asking.

Meanwhile, the letter from Livy Brackett remained undiscovered where the runner had placed it on the board table of the shanty, propped against the half model of the *Ariel* so that Chidsy Alwyn would surely find it.



MRS. BAXTER sat in the guest chair. The captain's bed was unoccupied. But spread upon it was a large square flag of blue bunting. Upon it Mrs. Baxter was sewing white letters. She worked nimbly and with concentration. Chid slept gently on his bed near the window. It was his good day. All the days, lately, seemed good. Even those days of pain and ache were not so exhausting now, and Chid had several times walked unaided into the general ward to visit with the other patients. The fever was leaving him with characteristic rapidity, and this morning Dr. Parsons had mentioned with satisfaction that his days in the infirmary were numbered.

Chid stirred, watching Azial's wife at her work. She had been good to him, to him and to his dreams; like an extra pair of hands and feet.

"Ma'm," Chid said sleepily, "ma'm, what are you doing?"

"It's a battle flag for Captain Perry, Mr. Alwyn." She held the flag for Chid to see. "*Don't Give Up the Ship,* it says. See. They were the last words of his friend, Captain Lawrence, when he was killed on the *Chesapeake* last month. The news upset Cap'n Perry no end. They were midshipmen together long ago. The captain got permission to name his ship *Lawrence* by the same post that he got the dreadful news. He got up that afternoon, Mr. Alwyn; against Dr. Parsons' orders. It's the first time I ever saw him mad. 'I'll get up no matter what you say. There's work to be done,' the cap'n said. 'You'll not, sir,' says the doctor. 'I'll not permit it.' That's when the cap'n got mad, like I say. 'You forget,' Cap'n Perry said, 'that I am your superior officer. Have my clothes made ready, Dr. Parsons, please.' He was on his ship an hour later."

Is he well, really well?"

"I don't know. He was still terribly weak. But I do believe his spirit will keep him on his feet."

Chid grinned. The late afternoon shadows crept from the forests, mellowing the raw scars of roads and clearings about the settlement. Mrs. Baxter put away her sewing kit.

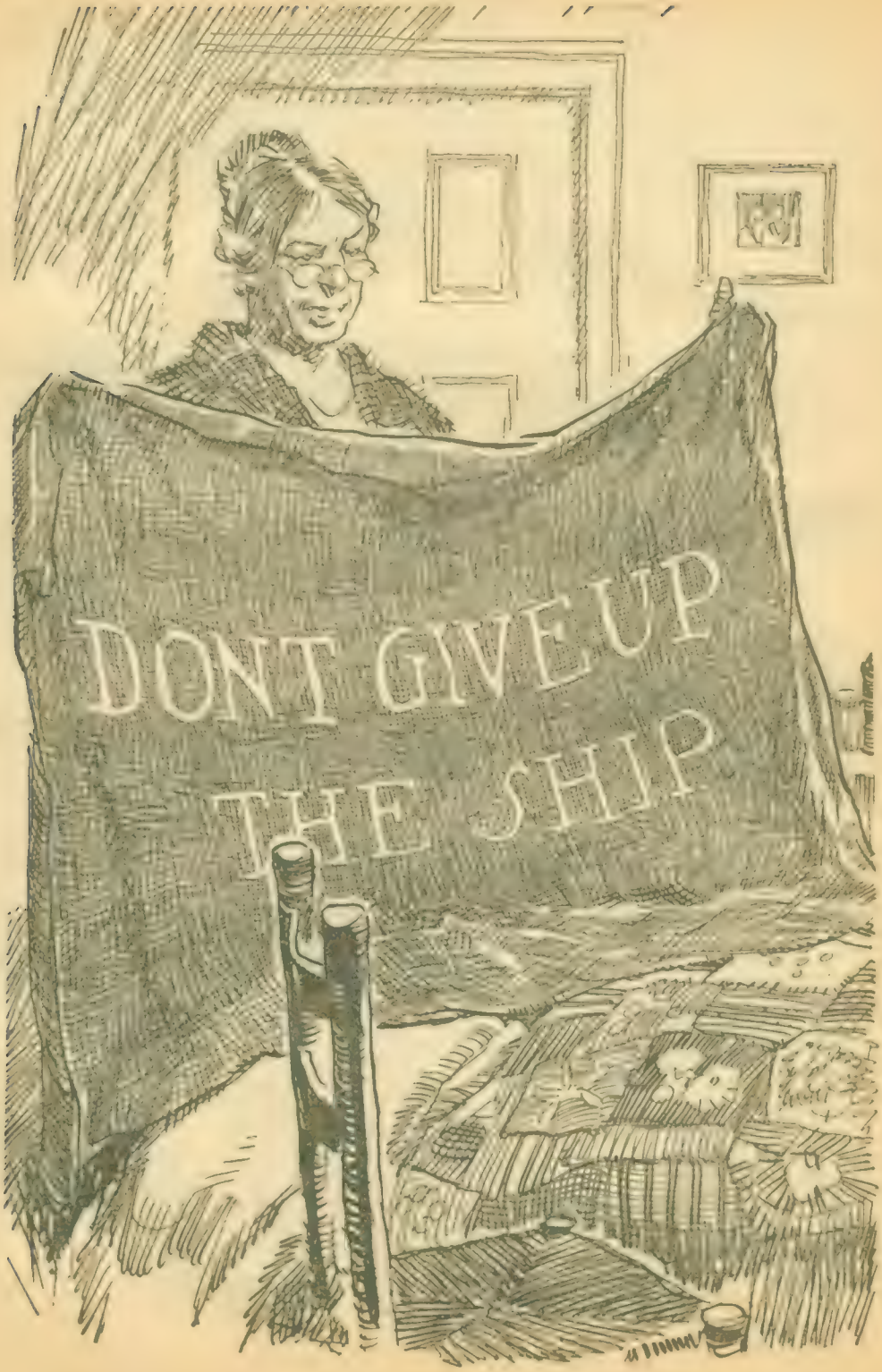
Chid told Azial's wife all about Mary, and all about his plans. He felt no need to be cautious or reserved with her. It felt good, terribly good to talk so, to put all his secret hopes and thoughts and yearnings into actual words.

"She sounds like a mighty sweet girl. I'd admire greatly to be neighbors with your Mary."

"Thank you, ma'm. I guess she's kind of grown to be the best part of my dreams. There wouldn't be much sense to the rest without her. You'll like her, I reckon."

"I'm sure I will. Good night, Mr. Alwyn. I'm not coming any more."

"Good night, Mrs. Baxter. I'll be down to repair up the arks in a few days."


DONT GIVE UP
THE SHIP

Chid lay for a long while looking idly over the lake. Below him the fleet hung lazily on the green waters. The brigs had joined the schooners at the moorings now. They rested in the sparkling path of the sunset with wings folded, like gulls gathered in some pleasant cove for the night. The sentry boat passed between them, leaving a crisp wedge of ripple. He could hear the hail of the guard and the answering "All's well" from the watchmaster of each vessel. Thin wood smoke ghosted straight up into the warm evening from the brick galley chimneys. From the *Lawrence* Mrs. Baxter's flag suddenly crept to the truck of the mainmast. It brought a lusty cheer from the men who had gathered at the rails, and on the *Ariel* somebody commenced to sing in a deep strong voice. Out where the dark green swath cut the yellow shallows of the bar, a rowing boat lay like a floating chip upon the bay. From her bow a man sounded with a long staff, plunging it deeply into the waters as the boat moved slowly into the lake. He continued thus to watch until his dinner was brought to him. That night he dined with relish.

A SOBER member of the Friends' Society, who served as orderly in the pest house without any compensation except the knowledge of his own faithfulness to his belief and his conscience, finally came for the pewter dishes.

"Thee dined well, friend," the man said. "Another few days and thee will be gone from here."

"It's a battle flag for Captain Perry, Mr. Alwyn." She held the flag for Chid to see. Don't give up the ship, *it says.*

"A-yep. I been waiting on it."

The Quaker smiled. He was a queer, small man in dull black clothing with a shy smile and light blue eyes and curious, pointed hair waves at each temple. Chid thought he looked like the bisque statuette of Pan that used to stand on Aunt Leety's back-parlor whatnot.

"Thee is invited to join in the ward singing this evening," he said, watching Chid oddly, "Indeed, 'twould be seemly of thee, as thee may learn."

"I might," Chid said.

He had no particular desire to join in the weekly hymn singing, but when he heard the Quaker's pitch pipe in the next room and the strangely lusty singing that followed, he got up and walked slowly into the ward. There were about forty patients there, all naval men, hardy, rough-skinned sailors and ship's boys.

Chid sat away from the window that was open to the night. The Quaker stood in the center of the great room under a lantern hanging from the cobwebbed rafters, beating out the measure of the hymn by clapping his hands. The singing, it struck Chid, was extremely loud and spirited tonight, and in the crowded room he detected a tenseness that he could not at first understand.

He waited for a chorus, in which all hands joined, before asking about it. A gnarled ancient seaman sat beside him, trying to be as noisily songful as his mates.

"Not now, matey. One goes," said the old sailor nodding toward the window. "Sing the hymn goddamit!"

Chid sang, still not understanding. A man had gone to the window, grasped a rope that swayed in the darkness, dropped over the sill, and, hand over hand, disappeared downward. As he watched, another man broke from the ranks and followed.

"We're goin' to join the fleet," the seaman whispered to Chid. "Word's out that Perry's goin' inter the lake tonight. His battle flag's flyin'."

"Why go this way?"

"Hell! We're counted sick men, matey. Some of us is, I guess. But the cap'n's got too damn human, sez I; he wouldn't hear o' lettin' us back to our berths yet. Whose war is this anyways? It ain't his'n alone, is it? No, sez we, it ain't; not by the pawls o' the capstan, it ain't! So we're goin'."

"All of you?"

"Tom Shad, he ain't; nor mebbe two-three others. They still got the fever inter their bones. But by the liver an' lights o' Barney, laddy-mate, they's times when they's nuthin' like some action for on'y half-sick men like us. We put it up to Cap'n Perry an' he was damn appreciative, but he give us orders to stay an' sot a marine guard to the bottom o' the stairs to make 'em stick, he did. The pure gall o' the cap'n fair staggers us, mate. He's ready to fight it out wit' his ships on'y a third manned."

"Some more men came from York State today, didn't they?"

"Huh! Cap'n, he was waitin' fer two hundert; sixty come. We had to do this; cain't y' see?"

"How about the Friend?"

"Blast me, 'twas his idee! Now, you sing loud, mate, to cover them lads a-droppin' down the topsides o' this here hulk. My lad, the guns'll speak at last."

There were five men and himself left when Chid finally stopped singing. The Quaker, looking more than ever like Pan, peered at Chid through the echoes of the bare loft, and dimmed the lantern.

"Thee is not leaving the singing, friend?" he inquired.

Chid hadn't thought of it. He doubted that he had the strength to let himself to the ground. But he suddenly wanted to go, to leave this place that had been almost a prison, also to do something.

"A-yep," Chid said, "I'm goin'."

"Every man is his own judge," the Quaker said, "but for thee 'tis different. Thee is yet plainly weak, friend."

"I want to go."

"So be it then." The Quaker's eyes held respect. "Some of us," he said quietly, "cannot fight. But, friend, 'twas Jesus Christ himself who gave authority to help where help be needed. Tom Shad, friend, give a hand if 't please thee."

Shad and two seamen hauled the end of the escape rope to the sill. With quick

expert motions Shad threw a French bowline into the fall. Shad swung the bights over Chid, one to sit on, the other for a body support. Then the three men lowered Chid to the ground.

"Go with God," the Quaker called softly from the window. "Aye, and make it passing hot for the British, friend."

Chid did not answer. Ahead of him lay a cleared pasture and beyond was the shore of Erie and the blackness which shrouded the fleet. It would be moving at last, moving stealthily through the inky moonless night to thread the narrow channel and spread its wings before a surprised and unprepared enemy with the dawn. There were men swimming to the vessels, to be hidden by understanding mates until the battle rattles called. On the dark peninsula the pit guns would be manned; the rowboat, holding position against the freshening south wind over the channel, would have a shuttered blue lantern ready to guide the pilots. Chid heard the slow muffled clink of capstan pawls far off-shore. That would be his own *Ariel*, getting ready to follow her towing boat.

He felt a sudden exhilarating pride in his own part in the building of the fleet. It had been hard body-killing work. Whatever this land was to mean to him, it would always be good to know that he had had a hand in carving it.

Chid walked rapidly, fighting against the quick tiredness that surged through him. He walked south; along the Waterford Turnpike. He slept for a few hours in Azial's blankets in the rude lean-to on one of the hauled-out arks.

At dawn he was at work, taking it easy, conserving his strength. He paused from time to time to listen, resting the iron-bound caulking mallet on his shoulder. But there came no rumble of cannonading from the direction of the lake.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PREPARE FOR BATTLE

CHID was aware first of the scolding of the disturbed crows far back from the Le Boeuf shore; then the absolute stillness of the forest as its life waited. Presently he heard the complaint of a dry axle. Chid caulked on until he could see the wagon. Time was precious. At last the outfit came into view on the cart path skirting the creek bank. Azial Baxter swayed on the summit of a huge pile of natural crooks and knees. Beside him was a passenger whom Chid did not at first recognize.

"Chid!" Azial greeted. "Dang it, the way Missus said, I 'spected to find you caved in. You all right?"

"Good," Chid said. "The old swing is coming back fine. The arks are about caulked. Who you got along with you there?"

"Old friend o' yours, Chid. Come on him a-hoofin' it."

Chid saw who it was then, not believing until the passenger dropped to the grassy path shoulder and ran toward him.

"Nez!"

"Chid, you ol' son of a ——!"

They clouted each other, gripping hands. "Whyn't you two kiss?" Azial grinned and commenced unloading. Chid sat down completely exhausted by the greeting.

"What in nation you doing in seaman's uniform, Nez?"

"I jined the navy brigade, Chid. Lieutenant Packett, he stood me one too many snorts on Brother Jonathan down to a tavern in Utica. I jined. But I ain't sorry, mind. I was a damn fool to try to run away from it all, Chid. A man can't do it an' I know it now. Just because you're *told* you can go ain't no reason to *think* you can."

"Where's Antoine?"

"In Canada—captured."

"Nez, you better tell me about it."

Nez and Antoine both had enlisted. They had been made very drunk at Utica by Perry's recruiter and neither had remembered much until they had awakened in a jouncing freight wagon bound west long the Great Genesee Road. Antoine had been resentful, cursing this new delay in reaching his beloved Otter. But he had been too sick the first several days to do anything about it and when he was able to it was too late.

There were eighty-three recruits in

the wagon train. They reached Erie shore on the fourth day and camped on the beach several miles west of the junction of the Black Rock road to wait for the boat from Presque Isle, which a mounted courier had been sent for. On the second day of the encampment, lounging after the noon mess, they found themselves suddenly surrounded by a force of British marines and Indians. There was nothing to do but surrender without resistance. The British marine captain quickly divided the group to his liking. Thirty were selected, after questioning, as carpenters and blacksmiths and sent on board the armed schooner which had now come to anchor off the shore. They were, the whispered word had it, destined for the British navy yard in Canada where the new *Detroit* was being pressed to completion. Antoine was with this group. Lieutenant Packett and his yeoman, a beardless school boy, were held as military prisoners. The rest, obviously farmers, were divided into small groups and the Indians given orders to drive them to the south and scatter them.

Nez was in a group of twelve that was at once prodded along an old trace path by the delighted savages. Nez did not dwell upon the details of their escape from the Indians. Chid suspected that he himself had engineered it. But one early dawn near a great bog, ten of the party had washed warm, drunken Indian blood from their bodies and retraced their steps. They had reached Presque Isle on the morning of the day that Chid had left the pest chambers.

"You were in the fight yesterday, then, Nez?" Chid asked.

"What fight? There was none, Chid. I was put on the *Ariel* 'cause I knew her so good. Us schooners got through the channel fine. We waited till daylight for the brigs but nary the *Niagara* or the *Lawrence* got through. They was a peppin' south wind, you recollect, an' not hide nor hair o' the British fleet. 'Twas our one chance an' we muffed her."

"Not enough water?"

"Not enough by twelve inches, even with the brigs lightened. They both stuck fast. An' don't you think 'twas bunglin', Chid. Perry and Uncle Noah done all they could. The fault's way beyond them, back to them stinkin' patriots what held up shot an' powder an' crews so long whilst the lake was deep an' the bar could've been crossed anytime."

"Perry can try today again. The wind's varying northerly."

"The hell he can; not for a long while to come he can't, Chid. There's the devil to pay an' no pitch hot at Presque Isle. The *Lawrence's* got herself a stove bow, from settin' on a laidge. An' she careened so far she commenced bustin' o' yards an' top hamper. We got her beached, waitin' on shipbuilders that ain't to be had. Off the mouth is the hull British fleet now. They can't get in an' we can't get out an' it suits 'em fine. Word come this mornin' that their army's gettin' ready to move south. Chid, this hull nation right now ain't worth one hoot more'n Perry's chances o' gettin' into the lake to fight."

NEZ stretched out on the cool sod, chewing a switch of black hazel, drawing the sweet cloying oil from it. He looked gaunt and unusually thin. His beard was beginning to sprout in reddish stubble again. He regarded Chid in a long appraisal for several minutes, then spoke abruptly.

"This here call ain't all social, Chid," he said. "I been detailed to locate you to help repair up the *Lawrence*. There's no real shipbuilders to Erie save you an me an' Uncle Noah. Did you get out o' the pest house with the others?"

"A-yep. How did Perry take it?"

"Like you'd 'spect, Chid. He like to cried, then he give 'em all three lashes an' doubled their rum dots for the duration. He made the Quaker hon'ary fleet chaplain. He sez any parson who can say 'Go with God an' give the British hell,' or some such, ain't no ordinary man."

"He said that to me, Nez."

"Tom Shad said he did. And now Captain Perry is waitin' on you, Chid."

"Let's go, Nez,"" Chid said shortly.

"Wait. First there's a message you ought to read."

And he handed Chid Livy Brackett's

new-found letter about the capture of Mary Leet and her dad.

THE *Lawrence* lay upon the Cascade ways, a huge formidable monster lurking in her own shadow, reaching searching angular tentacles, laced with cobwebs of rigging, into the sky. It was a brilliant moonlit night in late July. The still bay was cleft by a path of silver extending into an infinity of soft blue water and heaven. On the distant dunes, a night creature laughed shrilly; under the counter of the brig, a feeding fish slapped the sleeping water. Beyond the bow of the brig, snuggling close against the limits of the shipyard, the forest brooded black and silent and dead. Occasionally, like a whisper in a cathedral, the gentle south wind sighed in the timber, tiredly and without spirit.

Chid was at the starboard patch at the bow. Azial Baxter was at the port one. They were painting, with thick pot lead, the crisp new planks that now sealed the wounds of the ship. Beneath the planking was a solid blanket of live oak and beneath that strong hand-hewn rock elm timbers, notched and trunneled, fitting faithfully wood to wood and bedded in hard-driven oakum. It had taken six long painful days of unceasing labor to make the hurt ship whole again.

Chid swung the corn brush with weary strokes, smearing the thick gummy coating on the hungry new wood. Presently he came shoulder to shoulder with Azial at the bow and there was no more of the white patches. Neither man spoke. They placed their empty pots on the scaffold from which they worked and wordlessly climbed to the deck of the ship by a sapling ladder from the lake shore.

Chid lay himself down on the bare midship deck. But Azial first went aft to the pacing figure.

"How now, Mr. Baxter?" Captain Perry whispered.

"Finished, sir. You can la'nch when yer a mind to; say after two-three hours to let the lead dry some."

"And the wind?"

"I'm sorry, sir," Azial said; "it'll be south ag'in tomorrer, like it's been the last week. I know this here climate, sir. Only a stiff norther would pile up the lake to where you need it, an' I don't see no norther in the signs."

"Thank you, Mr. Baxter. You have done a very fine thing in helping us out."

"Chid wanted it that way, sir," Azial said. "Took me right from my loggin', he did. But I'm kind o' proud to do it, sir. I fit pike an' piece in sev'nty nine, with the Penn Rifles, but a corn brush's 'bout all I can handle now. Ain't you sleepin' none 'tall, sir?"

"I wish I could, Mr. Baxter. I wish I could."

"Good night, Cap'n."

"Good night, Mr. Baxter."

Azial lay down beside Chid. The watchman came to them and slid back the shutter of his lantern, letting the pale yellow beam fall on the two spent men. They were both asleep.

The man peered long into the night over the vast still lake. Then he marched noiselessly on bare feet over the smooth white deck to the bronze bell on the forecastle poop. He struck it four times, with two double swings of the clapper.

"Four bells . . . an' all's well; the flagship."

And like echoes, from the unseen reaches of the bay, came the silver answering four strokes from each ship of the Lake Erie fleet.

THE dawn mists were still heavy over the bay as the *Lawrence* was laid beside the wharf. Her stores, which had been taken off by lighter when she had partially capsized in the channel, stood waiting in great piles on the mole. From behind these now, stretching and yawning, appeared a band of ragged men.

Chid, awakening, remembered that they had been expected. Lieutenant Forest, who had gone recruiting in Packett's place, had sent word of their coming. The men lined the wharf stringer, looking over the brig with frank curiosity. Many had never seen a ship or boat of any kind before. They had come sober, drunk, needy, some even vengeful, a motley hinterland rabble with questioning eyes and an odd belligerence. Forest understood them. They

could be coaxed and wheedled, perhaps gently prodded, but on them the lash must never be used. They were not like his enlisted men. These men were proud freemen, citizens, volunteers. They had come because he had personally convinced them of the great need, of the peril that threatened their families and homes; he had begged them, pleaded with them, making them understand.

Forest formed them into a ragged line now, each man a pace behind his pack or his carpet bag. He walked to the bow of the *Lawrence*, pointing as he explained the mysteries of the strange vehicle.

"This is the bow, men. Not the front, please; the bow, b-o-w. The other end is the stern, s-t-e-r-n, stern. Now, then, all together. Let's show Captain Perry how lively we are. This?"

"Bow."

"This?"

"Stern."

"Excellent. Come aboard, please. Now then, this side, when you look toward the bow, is always the starboard. Starboard; right hand is star-board. Left is larboard; larboard."

"Starboard."

"Larboard."

A short fat farmer of forty stepped out of line, raising his hand timidly, like a school child.

"When do we fight, mister?"

"Sir, please. Always, when you address an officer, it's sir."

"Aye. When do we fight, sir?"

"We'll learn how first, my man. Now, between bow and stern, bounded, you might say, by the rail to starboard and the rail to larboard, is the midship. Aft of the midship is the quarterdeck. Respect it; you are permitted there only in the line of duty or by invitation."

Chid went over the gangplank. The scene filled him with new impatience. He could admire the spirit of the men, of Forest and his hard-working fellow officers. But the remembrance of the wasteful stupidity and indifference that had made all this pathetic belated preparation necessary made his blood boil. Nothing now moved fast or well enough for him.

Each day the jaunty little schooners tacked back and forth on the bay side of the bar, skirting the exposed sands, harassing the enemy fleet and guarding the channel entrance that was now plainly visible between two sand spits. Perry feared a concentrated attack of the British light-draught vessels or the launching of a fire ship through it. But day after day, as the great *Lawrence* was readied, the schooners held off an offensive.

Chid was filled with a vast impatience. The lake was dropping slowly but steadily. The wind held calm or south for days on end. With Noah Brown and Captain Perry he had figured and refigured trying to find means of unburdening the *Lawrence* and the *Niagara* enough to pass through the channel. It simply could not be done. One means defeated the other. To lighten to the draught now necessary meant the almost certain capsizing of the ships in even a faint puff of breeze. To remove the spars, or send down the topmasts to prevent capsizing would leave the vessels helpless before the enemy. To strip them of the heaviest of the guns robbed them of the power of defense. There was no hope save a sustained strong northerly blow; a storm to raise the lake level, and one other thing. Chid was going now to meet with the captain and Mr. Brown about that. He had no idea what it might be.

He walked quickly up the path to the town. Today, he did not pause to gaze upon the shipyard site beyond the Cascade Falls.

He was utterly weary of dreaming or planning except for one thing. The letter from Livey Brackett had been a chilling shock. From the moment he had read it, when Nez had handed it to him there on the road, he had been possessed of a dogged stubborn will to fight for and win the one component of his dream that alone mattered—Mary.

He had thought of her every moment since. She filled his waking and sleeping hours. He pictured her, alone, bravely guarding Moses, in the wilderness fort of Detroit, moving about in the confusion of an army preparing for battle, amidst drunken red savages and leering white men; hungry, tired, unprotected;

a prisoner. Moses, sick and weak, might be dead. Mary might be utterly alone and friendless. His weary brain played cruel tricks on him; reminding him always of a new danger for her. Sometimes, at night, he would wake, thinking that he had heard her call. . . .

The four partly repaired arks, drawn up on the muddy banks of the Le Boeuf and the piles of stacked timber that represented his entire wealth, were forgotten. Nothing mattered but that the fleet must be repaired and launched into the lake to meet and defeat this thing that had taken Mary from him. Through the whipping battle flags and the powder smoke of the savage little schooners, through all the preparations that seemed so futile and hopeless, he could see nothing but the image of Mary.

NOAH BROWN and Perry sat at breakfast in the cool darkened dining room of the Buehler house, where Chid found them. Brown nodded briefly to Chid then turned again to Captain Perry, with whom he had been conversing.

"I know the British," Captain Perry picked up the conversation. "I know their strategy and their mode of sea fighting. I am not worried, Noah. My unshaken faith in victory is predicated upon but one thing—getting the *Lawrence* and the *Niagara* into the lake. That is the main and pressing problem. Its solution can remain no longer dependent upon the chance good fortune of a north wind. We now have the guns and the shot and the manpower. We have but to meet the enemies of our country and they are ours. I have promised so to Commodore Chauncey—to the President himself, Noah. I am not afraid, nor in doubt. But once again, the whole nation is dependent upon you shipbuilders."

"You'll find us willing," Noah Brown said quietly, "but I don't know that you'll find us able. There are only Alwyn and Nott and a few boys and myself, Oliver. We are all of us spent and tired to death. But what do you want done?"

"I want floats, camels; four of them at least. And girders—and the brigs pierced for them."

"Pontoons!" Br. Brown breathed softly. "Upon which to raise the brigs and lift them over the bar. Damn, it's clever! It's possible! Chidsy, do we have plank whipped?"

"No, sir."

"Do we have girders; say four of them sixty feet long and stout enough to support the weight of an entire brig?"

"Manned and all guns mounted," the captain amended."

"No, sir. Not cut. I know of standing trees. . . ."

"So do I, Chidsy. It's the manpower that we need; to make plank, to fell trees, to build these great camels. It's a task almost as huge as building a brig itself, Oliver."

"I'm well aware of it. But can you do it? In, say three days at the most? Harrison is being pushed. The fleet alone can save him and prevent invasion."

Chid saw Noah Brown make a gesture that he had never seen him make before. He shook his head sadly.

"No man could," he said simply.

"You can have a hundred men from the fleet, Noah."

"Brawn only. I need skill and experience; shipbuilders, Oliver."

The captain pushed back his chair and rose slowly to his feet. He walked to the long window facing the bay. He stood there, silent and brooding, for a long time. He saw, dipping and tacking like sporting gulls, the white sails of the two fleets on their eternal patrol of the channel which cut the yellow bar. He heard from time to time the distant boom of single long guns; the sound following long after the puff of yellow smoke from under the bellied sails. Back and forth the opposing vessels tacked, like game cocks facing each other from opposite sides of a picket fence.

Le Grande entered silently. He stood respectfully at Perry's side, holding out a silver tray upon which lay a folded dispatch. Perry was not aware of him until the Negro touched him lightly on the sleeve.

"Fum de navy yahd, suh."

Perry read the dispatch; refolded it

and put it into his pocket. Then he turned to Noah Brown and Chid.

"I asked too much," he said. "But when man can do no more, God may do it for him. Gentlemen, Master Dobbins reports the wind veering strong east and very likely to swing north before nightfall."

Chid and Mr. Brown left by the front door. The great Eli Terry clock still boomed out the seconds in solemn cadence. Chid noted that it was a few minutes after ten o'clock. And then, with an odd impersonality, an indifference, he saw something else. The dial that showed the moon phases stood on the significant figure of August the first.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FLEET PUTS TO SEA

THEY walked up French Street. The day was bright and clear, suggested a crispness most unusual for Summer. Many of the houses and shops of the settlement were closed, the windows boarded up and the weeds growing tall and golden in the flower beds. There were not many people about and those who were walked with apprehension, and with worried eyes upon the lake.

Mr. Brown paused before the saddlery of William Denny.

"I must go east," he told Chid. "The navy now wants a fleet built on Lake Champlain. An invasion attempt is expected there too. I can offer you," he said carefully, "journeyman's wages and a good situation there, Chidsy. I had thought that you, not I, would be the one to remember what this day is."

"I just remembered it," Chid said. "I've looked forward to it for years, seems if, Mr. Brown—journeyman, at last. It's hard to believe. But I can't go with you to Lake Champlain."

"Not even as foreman, Chidsy?"

"No, sir. I don't know what I'm going to do. I was all set—until, well, things suddenly changed. I was going into business right here, sir."

"I'd not like to see you desert your trade, Chidsy. You are almost a Carmody."

"I wasn't meaning to desert my trade, sir. I love it and it's all that I know. I was going to open a shipyard."

"On Erie."

"On Presque Isle Bay. I had it all picked out. A man couldn't find a fitter location; deep water, high solid banks to save man-handling; behind it all the timber in the world and—"

"Then you found some stakes on it one day, Chidsy? An option had been given."

"A-yep," said Chid, "that's right."

Mr. Brown studied Chid for a long minute, chuckling to himself in a curious way. He suddenly put his arm about Chid's shoulders, as a rather proud father might embrace his son.

"Chidsy, I don't know why not. I don't indeed. Brown and Alwyn—shipbuilders." Noah Brown laughed. "I was the one who optioned that site. For the same reasons that you wanted it. But it could be Brown and Alwyn."

"I was figuring to build steamboats when the time was right."

"Why not? I told you—was it coming up the lake from Black Rock?—that I believed in them. You are smart, Chidsy. The Fulton-Livingston combination hasn't yet throttled these lakes with their stifling franchises. Smart and forehanded—I don't know but that I'd rather have you a partner than a competitor."

"I reckon," Chid said, "that I could work with you, Mr. Brown. Trouble is, my money is tied up. I've been in a little venture down Waterford way and it's—well, not working out good. You'd want some money?"

"Yes," Mr. Brown said carefully, "with you, I would, Chidsy."

"Well, I'd want to put my share in. Seems if, with the power of money behind me, I'd really be a partner. You couldn't change your mind about me without it costing you."

Mr. Brown chuckled, not displeased. "I hadn't thought of it in exactly that way," he admitted, "but there's nothing wrong with the reasoning. Chidsy, beside stage accommodations, friend Denny trades in my favorite Madeira. Will you join me?"

"Obliged," said Chid and followed Mr. Brown into the harness shop.

They sat on an unpainted spoke-bench. Denny, passing tumblers, poured the rare wine from a stone jug.

"Chid, to Brown and Alwyn," said Mr. Brown.

"To a north wind, Mr. Brown," said Chid earnestly. "That's what I want first of all."

They talked for almost an hour. To Mr. Brown, the new yard was merely another in his growing chain of shipyards; opportunity and the chance of a bright promising partnership. To Chid, thinking about those deserted arks and the timber on the lowering Le Boeuf and of Mary, it was like planning for a Christmas that was past.

ALL that first day of Chid's freedom, the wind held east. It slackened, then veered, sometimes north and sometimes south but when it again steadied, it blew from the east. On the bay, the fleet was getting ready to cross the bar. The *Lawrence* and the *Niagara* were lightened to bare guns and shot until they stood two feet above their normal waterlines. One by one, the schooners were signaled in and additional temporary guns slung onto them. The long boats, towing lighters, crossed the choppy bay many times laden with fieldpieces that had been spared by Harrison's weary forces to the west. These were drawn quickly to hastily dug earthworks on the peninsula and trained upon the lake beyond the bar. The raw recruits that Lieutenant Forest had marched in the night before were already assigned to ships.

Chid was desperately tired. On every second day he still felt the torments of the lake fever. Today had been one of those days. He watched the preparations of the fleet, as long as the daylight permitted, with petulant impatience. There was no sunset tonight. A damp gray murk stole in from the east at dusk and pervaded the sky from horizon to horizon. Just before complete darkness fell he took a last look at the signal behind the settlement. The wind weft still waved from it, pointing lazily to the westward; but no red pennant, signal of a north wind, flew from the halyards.

He had not thought of a place to sleep. From habit he trudged up the path to the old shanty office.

He was not aware of the figure that waited on the block step until he was almost upon the man.

"Mr. Alwyn?"

"Who wants to know?"

"Pegleg Ruskin, United States marshal."

"A-yep," said Chid with a sinking sensation, "I'm Alwyn. What do you want?"

"To talk; private."

"Come in."

Chid struck fire to the stub candle. Ruskin, he noted by its pale gleam, was a chubby middle-aged man with a moon face and alert gray eyes. His trousers were tucked into cloth boot tops and he smelled, strongly but not unpleasantly, of horse. He seated himself with assurance, as if taking possession of the dusty room. Chid noted that belted under his coat was a flint-lock pistol, its brass-bound handle conveniently turned forward for a quick draw.

"What do you want to talk about?" Chid asked carefully.

"Well, Mr. Alwyn, several things. Let's begin at the beginning. What do you know about a privateer called the *Blessed Cause?*"

Here it was, at last. Chid felt suddenly almost ill. All these months, though unremembered for days at a time, that trouble had hung over to shadow even his brightest moments.

"Never heard of her," Chid said, making circles in the wax candle drippings.

"Let's get understood between us, Mr. Alwyn," Ruskin said without annoyance. "I know most of the story and can guess the rest. It would be better for all concerned that you don't let me guess too much.

"All right," Chid said, "I know her; I wish I never had. You'd better say where I stand, first, though."

"Fair enough," Ruskin said. "I want your statement as a witness for the United States in the trial of one Bolt, United States prisoner, and one George Lefferts, whereabouts unknown, for assorted crimes including piracy and murder."

"Lefferts is in the British navy," Chid said. "I met up with him once when we took a schooner away from them."

"You did? My boy, you should've hung onto him."

"Well, I didn't. Where'd you find Bolt?"

"He was easy—in a hospital on Staten Island, recovering from wounds that would kill an honest man. By that time we had the stories of the crew pretty well sorted out. The Court could not help but wish to believe those men, especially two chaps called Griswald and —Reefer, I think the name was. But we had to have proof. We let Bolt go free and trailed him. He met Lefferts in Carolina and we caught them redhanded digging into a cache near Wilmington Beach. But Lefferts scared and he shot one of our boys dead and skedaddled."

"You found the money he took away in the boat?"

"Not very much of it. Lefferts was aiming to cheat Bolt, I guess—he'd already taken the lion's share for himself. But we found enough to break up Bolt's defense that the crew had taken the money and divided it. The Jamaican nigger crucified them both plenty for the slaughter of his mates. Then we got after that matter of the murdered captain—not that it was a great loss, y' understand. But murder is murder. Now, answer careful, Mr. Alwyn. Did you hit Captain Fish with a pistol butt?"

"Yes."

"Where was Bolt when you did it?"

"On the other side of Fish. He was wounded."

"Aye. Was he in a faint; out cold?"

"No. I heard him cursing; a couple of times."

"Then he could have stabbed the captain after you pistoled him, hey?"

One by one, the schooners were signaled in and additional temporary guns slung onto them. The long boats, towing lighters, crossed the choppy bay many times.

"A-yep. Look, I didn't do any stabbing, Mr. Ruskin. I—I can't prove it perhaps. But I didn't do it."

The marshal looked at Chid keenly, studying him.

"So that's why you broke arrest and lit for here, hey?" he said finally.

"A-yep. I couldn't see how I could get out of that. I had a chance with the other stuff. I mean the mutiny and piracy."

"MR. ALWYN," Ruskin said, lighting a Havana from the candle, "you made a common mistake; innocent, you fled from the law. Dammit, sir, didn't it ever occur to you that this is a free country? Didn't it ever occur to you that the law and the gov'mint is just as interested in freeing an innocent man as convicting a criminal?"

"Well," Chid said, "where do I stand?"

"Free as a bird," Ruskin replied. "Your story checks; you told me the absolute truth. Griswold, he saw just what you told me."

Mr. Ruskin stood up and drew a large silver watch from his pocket.

"Whew! Nigh on to midnight, Mr. Alywn," he said. "Now, I'll have to write this out and have you swear to it. It'll clear you legal and cook Bolt's goose."

"Surely. I'm willing to swear."

"Good. I'll look you up in a couple days. Well, good night, Mr. Alwyn."

"Good night, Mr. Ruskin."

Chid, undressing, felt buoyant lightness. He had never before fully realized the depressing weight of that *Blessed Cause* trouble. But it had been present always, like a threatening cloud that would some day move into the brightest of his skies and spill its storm and destruction upon him.

He could think of nothing but Mary. She alone mattered in all his tumbled world. He had done all that he could to free her. For him, as for the nation, it was in the hands of Oliver Hazard Perry.

Chid fell finally into dreamless sleep. An hour after he had closed his eyes it began to rain. It rained heavily and steadily; in fitful chilling gusts driven by a strong east wind that veered more and more to the north.

"Chid!"

Chid awakened to rough shaking. Bleak raw dawn filled the shanty; rain beat noisily and monotonously on the shed roof and splashed loudly into spreading puddles under the eaves.

"It's me, Azial.

"Huh?"

"Stir yourself, Chid. You got a visitor."

Chid was vaguely aware of the rain-soaked figure beside Azial. Of course he remembered Packett; he'd commanded the *Ariel* before Perry had sent him east to recruit.

"I shouldn't be stopping, Mr. Alwyn," Packett said, his young face wan and drawn under a month-old blond stubble, "but it'll take but a moment to tell you."

"You got away?"

"Yes, from Fort Detroit, six days ago. Mr. Alwyn, I saw Miss Leet there, and her father—your friend Antoine—"

Chid jumped to the floor, fully awake.

"Tell me!"

"Don't worry, Mr. Alwyn. They're all all right. Miss Leet wanted you to know. It didn't work out so good, the idea of using prisoners on naval building. There were strange fires, missing tools; the damnedest mistakes. Mr. Leet got sick again."

"Lieutenant—"

"It was faked, Mr. Alwyn. He didn't do a tap of work for the British. But Miss Leet played at nursing him. Antoine got into so many fights that they confined him. But they got the *Detroit* finished somehow, and she's on her way to join the squadron."

"What are they doing now?"

"Getting ready to attack, I take it."

"No, I mean Mary—Miss Leet; Moses?"

"Oh. Well, they're being taken east to Montreal to be exchanged. They'll be leaving any day now, by a galley called the *Lion*—a Bermudian rigger, the only one on the lake. I'm asking the captain to warn our patrols to let her alone; a scrap would only see our own people killed.

"Thank you," Chid said.

From time to time the great vessel groaned as a new lifting strain was put upon her by the rising arks. The Lawrence *rose steadily, ominously, like a giant lake squid emerging from fearful subterranean caverns.*

Chid arose slowly, pulling on his pants with trancelike motions. He could never after recall his exact emotions then.

"Look," he said, after the officer had gone, "I've got everything I want, Azial. I'm free, I'm a journeyman, a foreman; Mary is coming back to me; Mr. Brown wants me as his partner in a shipyard. I got it all without money. But I can have a big chunk of that too, now. Azial, I reckon I been chasing the wrong thing, something that really doesn't matter very much."

"But, Chid, you got them things, like you say."

"Yes, I got 'em. But I don't really want 'em. I only want Mary and one other thing, I guess. Nez named it to me long ago. It's being able to live with myself, Azial; it's earning the right to have 'em—"

"Chid!"

"I been troubled, Azial. But I ain't any more. You want to help me? All right, you can. Take your team to Waterford, hire more teams, horses, oxen, wagons. Pick up Bugle and his gang—"

"Bugle's quicker'n a mink. He's a fast loader."

"He's not to load, Azial. Understand? Not to load. He's to get those arks up here to the navy yard. Tote them, snake 'em over the mud—I don't care how, just so he gets them here by noon."

"Chid, this is your hull future!"

"No, it isn't! I been thinking it was, that's all. I don't reckon any man has an individual future. It's only the nation that has a future; if that's lost there's nothing ahead for any of us. Now go ahead, Azial; do as I say. I'll be getting the brigs ready. Nez will be felling those girders."

"You're goin' to use the arks?"

"A-yep. All four of 'em, for camels, pontoons—to pass those ships over the bar!"

Abruptly, Azial plunged into the rain and climbed to the wagon seat, taking the sodden reins in his great paws. He clucked to the team. The horses snorted steam and slithered the wagon over the slick clay. With the great bulk of Azial Baxter hunched against the driving rain the wagon disappeared into the wet gray mists.

IN THE damp dripping rain shroud the *Lawrence* seemed huge. She lay on the surface of the bay, her slab topsides enormous, in a still, unrippled pool. Around her, beyond her overhangs, the lake danced with the splashes of the rain drops, like wine in ferment. Her normal waterline, marked by hoary green bay weed, was far above the lake's surface. It was as if the bay had turned into molasses or butter and refused to cradle the vessel.

Chid stood idle on the wharf at last, hugging the lee side of the store shed. His tools were oiled and put away. He watched the great ship rise slowly out of the lake with satisfaction. He and Nez had been piercing the two brigs since early morning. They had cut four opposite matching ports above the normal waterlines. Real Taylor's men had inserted the girders thwartships, like giant skewers in a roast. Under the unbarked projecting ends of them the four arks from the Le Boeuf were now swamped. All day long the fleet had lain hidden in the folds of the lashing curtain of rain. The pumping had commenced at last.

Chid could hear the steady chunking of the wooden pumps as six men bent to the flailing yoke on each ark. The expelling water, adding to the wet desolation, splashed noisily into the bay, and from time to time the great vessel groaned as a new lifting strain was put upon her by the rising arks. The *Lawrence* rose steadily, ominously, like a giant lake squid emerging after ages from fearful subterranean caverns.

The splashing of the pumps suddenly ceased.

"And how now, Master Dobbins?" Captain Perry called from the quarterdeck.

"She draws for'ard five feet, sir."

"And aft?"

"The same, Captain Perry; five on the mark, sir."

"Very well. Belay the pumping, Master Dobbins."

There was sudden activity in the dusk. Men had waited for this moment all day—all month, all year, Chid reckoned.

"Stand by the towing boats, Mr. Elliot. Master Dobbins, I take it we'll pass over the bar?"

"By a full twelve inches, sir."

"Get a strain on your hawsers then. Signal out the schooners to protect the passage."

"Schooners proceeding to station, sir."

"You may commence towing, Master Dobbins. Lieutenant Forest, battle stations, please. Open your magazines and light your matches. Is the *Niagara* ready?"

"All ready, Captain. She'll join us as fast as the pontoons can be returned, sir—say an hour."

"Very well. Into the lake then, men, to meet the enemy of our country!"

Slowly the *Lawrence* moved away from the mole, sliding like a ghost into the bleak mists of Presque Isle bay and Lake Erie beyond. Chid's last view of her was the momentary revelation of her battle flag, the stark white letters etched like silver strands against the coming night: *Don't Give Up the Ship.*

Nez shook the rain from him and came to stand beside Chid.

"They'll be pipin' for carpenter rates immediate, Chid. Will—will you be comin'?"

For a moment, Chid did not answer. He was still looking, fascinated, at those silver letters: *Don't Give Up the Ship.* He knew that some men fought with their brains, when war came, and some with their dreams—and some with their blood. Up till now he hadn't realized that a man must fight with all three. His eyes were still on that splendid device: *Don't Give Up the Ship.* He heard Nez repeat his urgent appeal: "Will you be comin'?"

Chid's answer was cryptic. "We won't," he whispered softly. "By God, we won't!" He stepped into the barge. *Don't Give Up the Ship.*

CHAPTER XXX

ENEMY ENGAGED

CHID finished the letter which he was writing. His desk was an up-ended tub. He sat in the early shade of the *Ariel's* pivot gun, his breakfast of pork sausage and what Hercule Misereau, the misnamed cook, thought was Indian pudding, heavy on his belly. The dew was wet on the deck; it stood in thinning pools in the folds of the furled sails. The sun, though still only on the horizon, was strong and warm as it had been each day since the squadron had been searching for the British fleet.

The pine-wooded shores of Put-in-Bay were cool and beckoning. Birds sang among the branches; the axes of the woodchoppers, cutting billets for the open brick deck fireplaces of the fleet rang clear and clean, echoing against the solid rock face of lofty Gibralta Point and the neighboring Bass Islands. The fleet sprawled in the sylvan bay, cables short as always. Already men were crawling aloft to the endless chores of maintaining the rigging, gun crews were at their eternal practice—fire, sponge; powder, ball and patch; then ram—Chid had seen it for many days now.

He glanced anxiously aloft. The lookouts, the eternal watchers, were in their masthead barrels, sweeping the lake with extended telescopes, hoping for that rating of sailing master promised by the captain to the first man to cry the British fleet. "Any day now," Dan Dobbins had said, interpreting the gibberish of the Wyandot who had come out of the sunset two evenings ago, paddling his log canoe furiously. "Malden is gettin' short o' rations since we cut off the lake route from the Long Point base. Barclay has orders to sail east an' fetch stores. By God, sir, we'll have him out of his lair yet!" It might be today, Chid reckoned. The wind was southwest, moderate as yet, promising a good sailing day.

Chid's letter was to Aunt Leety. He had thought long, before writing it. For him it was not the way it was for the other hands; he had no parents, no father nor mother save Moses and Abby Leet. He wrote:

> —and so, it will not be long now. We have been waiting—endless weeks it seems to us—for the English fleet to stand forth from beneath the protection of Fortress Malden and give us battle. We are ready, indeed impatient. I hear from my mates always the cry that they must get home for autumn chores, for the harvest and woodcutting against the Winter. After

the battle we will again be freemen, for our enlistments read 'for four months or until a major engagement has been fought.' For many the four months is long past. Even I, who am one of the newest of the recruits, am impatient for the end, for that time of peace and prosperity that Captain Perry has promised us.

The captain has been stricken with a return of the lake fever. But he is on his feet again this morning. I can see him from where I write, pacing the quarterdeck of the *Lawrence* as impatient as the rest of us. He is truly a great man. Not one of us can help but feel the magic of him, his quiet faith and loyalty. Some of the malcontents, particularly a young lieutenant named Jesse Elliot who has always been jealous of Captain Perry, growl that this is a one-man fleet; that we are lost should the captain fall. I do not think so. His example and his spirit have been transferred to his officers, to the ship's boys, even to the two stupid Delawares who serve on my own vessel. My own commander, John Packett, I know, has been inspired by Captain Perry and even alone would follow the ideals and purposes of the fleet to the death.

But, dear Aunt, I would not write about only these matters. Rather, in this hour before the battle, it is to set my affairs in order. I have written above of Moses and Mary. They are to be free—possibly they are at this moment—and for that I am thankful. It sets the greatest of my affairs in order for beyond them and yourself I have little of value on this earth.

But for that little, in the event that I do not return from what must come at any moment, I ask you to inquire of Maggie and Azial Baxter, of Erie. Whatever is mine they will surrender to you. Mr. Pegleg Ruskin, United States Marshal of this district, may too, in time, collect certain monies due me. I want one tenth of any such sums to be given to Mrs. Slinker and the rest to come into the joint possession of yourself and Moses and to pass from you to Mary.

And now, dear aunt, I shall close this letter—

Chid folded the sheet into a packet and sealed it with a tallow dip. He was aware that it was a sober, mature letter; that he had never before written one quite like it, so measured and carefully phrased. But he felt sober and suddenly mature, as if a juvenile period of preparation, of insignificant endeavor and achievement had now passed and the coming trial would be the real contest. The stake now would not be mere failure or disgrace; it would be life or death, for himself and for four hundred others.

He was not afraid. He did not regret his decision. Deep within himself he felt a calm, almost buoyant peace.

He dropped the letter into the leather dispatch bag that hung from the main fife-rail. There were other letters in it, addressed in smeared, labored writing. Mr. Knell's striker, a tow-haired boy named Steve Winter, was sealing the *Ariel's* log and code in a lead box. Gravely, then, John Packett took a turn around it with a codline, lashing it to the taffrail. "Gentlemen," he said quietly to his sub-officers who lounged on the port side of the quarterdeck, "if we must strike, whoever survives—this must go overside."

"Very good, sir. I—I reckon it'll be there when—when it's all over, sir."

"I pray so, Mr. Macklin. But this, sir, is war, war . . ."

EVEN after he heard the lookout's lusty hail to the deck, Chid had the feeling that the fleet had tensed to the news several seconds before the cry. He heard the long-awaited call across the quiet waters, from the perch above the main royal yard of the *Lawrence*—"Ahoy the deck! Sail O, sir. Hull down alee, sir; mebbe five, mebbe six."

"British?"

"Aye, sir; out from the haze off Malden, sir. I make one a full ship, sir, wi' a schooner in the van—"

"Keep them in your eye, man!"

When Chid looked to the deck again, the dispatch pouch was gone. The mail gig was leaving from the port ladder, bound hurriedly for the other ships of the fleet.

Chid could hear the tinkling capstan music again, as he had heard it that night long ago when the *Ariel* had followed the blue light of the pilot over the bar. Sails tumbled to the deck, spilling the dew puddles. Without orders, sail trimmers moved grimly to the halyards. The longboat that had been trailing crept up the flat transom; swayed, two-blocked, under the horned stern davits.

The figure on the *Lawrence's* quarter-

deck was still now. Perry stood with his hands braced to the rail, feet spread, searching the lake beyond Gibralta Rock. But Chid knew that he was listening not seeing.

"How now, aloft?"

"Two ships, sir, another schooner—full an' bye, standin' east, sir. Avast, sir, there comes another! I make it a brig, sir. Aye, a brig—an' a schooner escorting. Red dusters all, sir—I reckon it's the British fleet, sir!"

Chid felt the tension that ran through the waiting ships, could almost hear the curl of bare feet as they sought to grip the smooth, holystoned decks.

A silver pipe call floated over the bay from the flagship. Chain cables stood up-and-down; tripping iron pawls clinked out the waiting seconds. A forestays'l and mizzen spanker swept aloft on the *Lawrence;* then on the *Niagara.* Chid heard the creak of the fores'l throat blocks as the gaff crept up the foremast of the *Ariel.*

"General quarters! All hands, general quarters!"

A clarion bugle took up the call; rolling marine drums at the main hatches repeated it in a mighty thunder, echoing it against the evergreen shores of Put-in-Bay.

"Jibs and tops'ls, lads! Sail trimmers aloft; jibs an' tops'ls. Stand by to sheet home—handsome all!"

"Jib set, sir!"

"Sheet her snug; we've Gibralta to weather! Lively!"

"Aye, lively it is, sir."

"Gunners, post! Keep formation, quartermaster. Mains'l—overhaul your braces an' bowlines handy! Topmen, away! Carpenters, get your decks doused and sanded!"

Chid cast his bucket into the orlop bin by its lanyard, drew the sharp Erie sand to the deck, scattered it fanwise where the blood would flow thickest. He could see the fleet, suddenly blossomed in the billowing white of new snow, anchors a-cat and dripping into the blue lake. One by one the ships rounded onto the southwest breeze as it came strong beyond the lee of the island; leaned gently away from it, as if tickled by it; laughing, chuckling, a little grimly—and followed the *Ariel* in single line to where the six British sails had luffed into the wind and stood awaiting the fleet that was built in the forest.

They were past the Middle Sister, shining like a green emerald in a shield of blue, in the single line formation that was the battle order. The *Ariel,* in reward of her swiftness, led the line. The *Niagara,* flanked by the *Scorpion,* plunged a half-cable's length astern; beyond her the fleet—the *Lawrence* and the *Caledonia;* Almy's saucy little *Somers;* the *Porcupine,* the *Tigress,* the *Trippe,* schooners all—stretched into the wind for a mile. "It's too bad," Chid thought, "that Dan Dobbins was sent off for supplies in the Ohio." Too bad—well, perhaps Dobbins who had cheated death so often would cheat it once again.

He could see the English fleet plainly, standing straight and tall, the ships with backed yards, the schooners with killed mains'ls, only four miles away, dark against the distant blue of the Canadian shore. He marveled at them, their perfection as ships. They gleamed with new and ample paint; rigging was taut, served and tarred, splices shining black, navy style, running rigging a clean slick pale yellow. These were real fighting ships, as perfect as any ship of the line in the ocean service, not frontier-built hulks, armed with short-range pieces, manned by farmers and trappers and merchants. This was the Royal Navy, the might of Britain—built to rule wherever there were waves to rule.

CHID felt a sudden blind hatred for the insolent red ensigns which waved lazily from the mizzen peaks of the arrogant fleet beyond the bow. But it was quickly replaced by pride, by sudden overwhelming faith, as he turned aft and caught sight of the American ensign at the *Ariel's* mainpeak.

He glanced aft to the *Lawrence.* Her battle flag flew, that same flag that Mrs. Baxter had labored over. The flagship was the second brig in line, having chosen the powerful new *Detroit* as her own adversary. But Chid saw suddenly that the *Detroit* was not second in the British line; she led the squadron. The change in the estimated British formation was discovered at the same moment

by Captain Perry. By trumpet Real Taylor ordered the *Niagara* to drop astern. Quickly the *Lawrence* surged forward. She sailed now in proud escort of the *Ariel*.

"Watch that damn Elliot," Shad growled to Chid, drawing on his iron pipe imperturbably. "He won't like that order worth a continental. Not that young hot-head, mate. By his own calculation, *he* is the hero of this lake. Hah! —look, boy; as I told you. He's laggin' fearful, sneakin' up to wind'ard the while. By Jed, matey, the *Niagara's* spoiled the line!"

"He's backwinded by the *Lawrence*, I reckon, Tom. He can't help it."

"My eye, he can't. Elliot's a sailor, lad. By Jehovah, he's a-goin' to let us run in alone!"

They were interrupted by the raucous grind of the battle rattle. At the same moment the *Lawrence* signaled a change in course of four points alee. Like the tail of a comet the fleet followed, now directly at the distant British fleet. "Here 'tis, mate," Tom Shad said quietly and offered his horny hand. "Luck, boy."

"Luck, Tom."

The magazines were open, shot and powder were swinging in nettings to the deck. Chid could hear the militiamen in the trestle-tree barrels charge their muskets, sending home their patches with a curse. A boy brought fire from the brick galley arch, touching it to Tom Shad's newly-fuzzed match; then sluiced lake water on the remaining wood coals. Macklin came and tested the pivot, revolving the gun platform a few times, taking mock aim. "This pivot," he said, patting the thirty-two in approval, "is worth any four guns of ordinary broadside, Shad. Serve her well." Shad didn't answer. His eyes were already riveted on his target, the schooner *Chippeway*, saucy and leering on the flank of the *Detroit*.

Hercule Misereau passed along the windward rail with a tall clay jug of grog and a sack of biscuits. Chid, as his mates did, downed the coarse liquor, then munched on a hard biscuit. It was something to do. Culver Coon gagged; tried to assuage the fire of the unaccustomed grog by a gulp from the sponge bucket beside the long gun. "Ninnies shouldn't drink," the cook sneered, retrieving his tin cup. "By God," Culver returned red-faced, "they have to drink to stay alive —your rations are too lousy to eat!" It was good to laugh, to ease the tension of the awful wait for the blast of that first gun.

It came at noon, when the wind had died to a whisper and the lake even here offshore was calm and glassy, when the two fleets were separated by less than half a mile. It was a range-testing shot from the *Detroit;* a harmless missile. Shad swore. "Let me, sir!"

Packett shook his head. "Hold fire, my man. You're long enough in the service to know you'll await orders."

"Aye, aye, sir," Shad grumbled.

But it was nerve-racking waiting in the profound airless hush, taking those testing shots while the fleet drifted slowly, slowly toward the black muzzles which stared at them like unwinking eyes of doom.

CHID hung over the low rail of the *Ariel*. He could feel again in this careful approach that unruffled calmness of Perry, admire the pure cool nerve of him as he held fire and ghosted slowly into effective range with his pathetically light guns. The fleet was taking regular hits from the British long thirty-twos now. He could hear the balls whistling overhead, crying like swift-winged birds, the angry spent whine of long range musket fire from the tops.

It was curiously impersonal. Chid had the distinct feeling of being only a spectator. But he felt sudden hot anger when a twelve-pound ball thudded dully into the *Ariel's* quarter. That hurt to the little schooner which he loved, which more than any other ship of the fleet was his own, somehow made him a participant.

"Half-canister range," Shad observed knowingly and spilled his pipe heel. "A smart man would open and cut up riggin' awhile."

As they turned, Shad toward his pivot gun, Chid to his clearing axes and fire buckets, they heard the bugle from the *Lawrence*. A cheer came from her decks, was echoed in the tops and sprang from ship to ship like fire in a dry forest, re-

verberating along the long American battle line.

"You may open, Shad," Packett called. "Sta'board twelves, bar and chain into their sailing gear, the thirty-two into British oak."

"Aye, sir," Shad bellowed jubilantly, his grin bland as a schoolboy's, "into British oak and British hearts!"

His gun spoke, the first shot of the fleet—and before the great piece had lashed against its tackle, broadsides swept from the entire line. Lazy acrid smoke and tongues of blood-red fire filled the air. Battle was joined at last.

Packett supported the *Lawrence* bravely. He soon saw that the strategy of Barclay was to concentrate upon the flagship and knock her—and more likely her commander—out of the action at the beginning. As the fleets closed and each ship locked with its assigned adversary he found that the two heaviest of the enemy ships, the *Detroit* and the *Queen Charlotte*, were both arrayed against the *Lawrence*. The flagship was taking a fast, murderous, concentrated fire from both. Packett could do nothing in direct aid; for against the *Ariel* were ranged the *Chippeway* and the big *Hunter*.

Shad's long gun, which he could aim almost like a quarter swivel, fired with the regularity of a clock tick. Macklin, glass to his eye, called the results with savage glee, shouting above the din. Nez was in the bow, sprawled on his belly, serving a musket with the calm detachment of a yokel at a turkey shoot. "Got him," Nez would croak while he reloaded. "Now, lobster coat, jest show that weather eye o' yourn ag'in, do." And his musket would spit.

Chid had nothing to do. He felt silly picking up splinters and spreading sand while men were dying on the battered *Lawrence*. Sometimes, in the sudden lulls of firing, he could hear their shrieks, see bleeding, mangled men being lowered to the cockpit where Dr. Parsons would be making grim use of those oak tables with the leather straps. He remembered with a shudder that awful scene in the shanty office during the British raid on the naval base, heard again the rasp of the saw, the cry of that man who was being cut up before his own eyes. . .

He did not want to look at the *Lawrence*. In an incredibly short time she had become almost a hulk; top hamper a shambles, fire on her foredeck, her quarterboat a mass of splinters hanging from the davits. Like the boat of the *Blessed Cause* in which he had tumbled the casks of prize money, thought Chid.

He sensed that Packett and Macklin were talking about the *Niagara*. She was desperately needed to engage the *Queen Charlotte* as had been planned, to relieve the flagship of one of the fanged snarling beasts which tore at her flesh. But the *Niagara* lay with main yard backed a safe half mile to windward, out of the fight, firing spasmodically without plan or purpose, making brave noise. Chid was aware suddenly of the tide of hatred for her which flooded the *Ariel*. "Elliot," he heard, hissed, with snarling curling lips, "Coward! Elliot, that yeller-gutted bastard!" With a curious sense of satisfaction, he saw Nez swing to the larboard rail and open a careful deliberate fire at the *Niagara*.

"By God, he deserves it," a man growled, passing canister to the twelve-pounder battery. "I wish to Christ we was closeter—Nez'ud lay that bastid Elliot out where he belongs."

Packett's speaking trumpet was suddenly turned to the midship deck. "Lads, stand by to close in. The commander can't take that fire much longer. Double shot your pieces and hold your fire. Sail trimmers, away!"

CHAPTER XXXI

THE FLAGSHIP FOUNDERS

THE *Ariel* surged slowly forward, moving into the terrific fray. Directly astern of the *Lawrence* she luffed and lost way. Each of her batteries now bore on an enemy. The gunners blew their matches bright and whooped as they pressed them to the touch holes.

"That did it, Tom!"

"By Jing, fore an' main royal in one shot! More chain, my hearties; that's the stuff for close work."

"Raked her deck like parin' an apple! Cookie, build up your fire an' we'll give 'em hot shot."

The thick yellow smoke burned Chid's throat, coated his mouth with a medicine-tasting bitterness. He felt a splinter slice his thigh, the hot surge of blood soak his pants and trickle into his shoe. He slapped the wound as he would have slapped a mosquito sting and thought no more about it. There was a man down at the larboard forward twelve, tearing at his knee and cursing. The surgeon's mates clutched at him, like waiting vultures; bore him moaning below. Chid spread sand on the place, kicked the severed foot overside with a sudden nausea. He wished that he could fight, not merely help, like a witless chamber-maid.

They had the *Hunter* under effective fire, diverting her offense from the *Lawrence*. But even Chid could see that it was too late. The *Lawrence's* fire had been growing steadily weaker as gun after gun was dismounted. Less than two-thirds of her crew remained able to fight; nearly thirty of her one hundred and thirty-six men had been killed. He was not to know that day that he was witnessing the bloodiest naval engagement ever fought.

The *Ariel* herself now lay in a deadly cross-fire. To walk upright was to court death. Canister and grape and sweeping marine fire thundered over the little vessel. She suffered much in the rigging from the high fire of the two-deckers; her idly flapping sails were holed and ribboned. Hercule crawled forward on his belly, building a fire on the hearth, rolling round shot into it. Steve Winter took them out with tongs, molten red and hissing, inching on his elbows with them to the guns. "Goddamn that Elliot," he muttered once. The next moment Winter shuddered and lay still. The hot ball dropped from the tongs, rolled across the deck, leaving a scorched, smoking path in the clean white pine.

He was dead when Chid crawled to him. Chid could see the clean bloodless hole of the musket ball in the forehead, over the left eye. It was a quick, perhaps painless, way to die.

"A man can do nothing greater than give his life for his country," the cook said piously as Chid dragged Winter forward.

"Don't be a damn fool," Chid snapped, suddenly angry, "the greatest thing he can do is to stay alive and fight for his country."

He looked suddenly upward. He was almost under the deep stern overhang of the *Lawrence*. Captain Perry stood on his quarterdeck, his eyes playing over the scene of carnage, unafraid, confident, somehow trusting. It surprised Chid to hear his own name suddenly called.

"Alwyn!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You're hurt, my boy." It was so like the captain.

"Nothing much. I almost forgot about it."

"Do you still have your longboat on the *Ariel*?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, ask Mr. Packett to send it to me, please."

It was curious, talking to Perry so now, remembering him that snowy night at Portersville, in his fever bed at the pest chambers. But even then, Chid recollected, creeping aft, he made you feel that he was a great man, cut of hero cloth.

Lieutenant Packett helped Chid lower the longboat over the stern. The little boat lay bobbing in the circular ripples caused by the gunfire on the calm lake. Packett cast a calculating eye over his men, his lips pursed. "I—I could run her ahead, sir," Chid offered.

Packett gave him a warm smile.

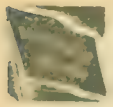
"Do so, Alwyn. As you see we're—ah, pretty busy."

Macklin, beside the commander, gave a short cackle. "Aye, busy, sir," he said witheringly. "But fighting—not deserting our ship because we're whipped."

Chid heard the sharp gasp of John Packett, saw the red anger steal over his young face. "I have known Commodore Perry less than two months, sir," Packett said quietly, "but sufficient time to know that no action of his need ever be questioned. I shall expect your apology, sir."

Macklin scowled and mumbled quick apology, averting his face. Chid dropped to his knees, the painter of the longboat in his teeth. Slowly he worked his way forward behind the bulwarks, passing the line outside the standing rigging, dragging the boat alongside. He could hear the sudden volley aimed at her, see

the small explosions of wood splinters from the lightly built boat.



WHEN he reached the bow he waited for the lull which always came after a heavy cannonading. Quickly, he then dodged over the rail and dropped from the bowsprit to the long boat. He gave a mighty shove against the stem—remembering suddenly those initials just inside of where he pushed—and propelled the boat under the counter of the *Lawrence*. The air above him was screaming with swift metal; cannon spit their smoke and fire only a yard above his head.

A boat crew from the flagship scrambled into the longboat.

"Where's the captain headin'?"

"Dunno, mate. But you can lay it's for the good o' the fleet. Jes', what a lickin' we're takin'!"

Perry stepped lightly down the port ladder, oblivious to the danger of exposure. He carried his blue battle flag folded neatly over his right arm; with his left he held his sword. *This is no commander deserting his ship,* thought Chid, *this is a man victorious!*

"By God! He's transferring his flag!"

"To the *Niagara,* I'll lay! She ain't hurt a hair."

"Lord," a bugler breathed, "my lips ache from tryin' to signal her in. Damn that swill-hearted Elliot!"

They pulled swiftly away from the doomed *Lawrence*. Chid could see the great gashes in her sides, the long furry splinters of the raw unseasoned pine that had gone into her planking. He found himself with an oar in his hand, pulling desperately. Marine fire showered mercilessly about them, sending savage geysers from the lake to blind them.

Perry stood in the stern sheets, unmindful of the terrific barrage that was leveled at the little boat. A flailing chain shot whistled over them, crying and moaning; he thought suddenly that whirling bar shot sounded like a whistler duck taking off from the salt marshes of Ram Island off Noank. A lead musket ball slapped against the flat of the captain's sword, dropped dully to the stern grating. Perry shrugged, his gaze fixed ahead.

"You better sit down, sir," Chid panted, pulling hard. "They're—they're after you."

Perry did not answer. He was taking in the battle, estimating the chances of snatching victory from this horrible defeat.

"Please, sir."

But the captain remained standing; aloof, disdainful, brave beyond fear of personal danger.

They slid under the bow of the *Detroit,* under the golden figurehead of the pagan chief Tecumseh. A seaman poised his cutlass, then cast it with all his power. Chid brought his oar quickly to the toss as the lethal blade hurtled toward the standing figure. The cutlass glanced off the oar, cut cruelly into Chid's knuckles, splashed spent into the lake.

"Please," Chid cried. "Sit down, sir! Get under the gunwales!"

"Easy, Alwyn," Perry smiled.

"I've got the right," Chid cried hotly. "Once—in that fire—long ago—you said I saved your life. If I did, your life is mine now. I beg you to take protection, sir!"

"Well spoke, lad," a seaman grunted behind him.

Perry looked at Chid oddly and suddenly sat down. As he did so a ball screamed a few inches over his head. He turned suddenly pale, looked at Chid with queer understanding. "That's twice, Chid," he said quietly.

The yellow powder smoke lay thick and choking on the water. Wreckage lay in their path, shattered spars and great sodden bundles of canvas, rigging-entwined yards, the *Lawrence's* crushed yawl boat, two bodies, slowly turning—the swill of battle.

They could feel a faint stirring of the wind as the longboat pulled clear of the engagement. A deafening bombardment roared from the long battle line. The *Caledonia* lay parallel to the British line, firing her small, ineffective twelves into the tough live-oak sheathed enemy brigs; the schooners, suddenly alive under the new breeze, darted in and out, pouring iron into an enemy that they already believed victorious.

Behind them the *Lawrence* was burning, her foremast already collapsed over

her shattered bow. "Waste," thought Chid, "waste—like that coffin we made for Old Man Tatum. Months of sweat and ache and grief and hunger and sickness, prime timber, iron—human life—destroyed in thirty minutes." But he thrilled to the lazy swirl of the ensign above the rising black smoke. It was not waste; not to keep that flag flying—no ship was dead, destroyed, while that flag still flew above her.

THEY cheered as the captain climbed the ladder to the deck of the *Niagara*. Pipes shrilled suddenly, the main braces slacked, headsails filled gently and the new flagship began to close to the battle. Slowly, ominously, she ghosted in, gun ports open and the yawing mouths of twenty fresh guns, served by twenty fresh crews, eager to spit their red hate at the enemy . . . and from the foreroyal truck flew the bold flag of a bold warrior: *Don't Give Up the Ship.*

The longboat clung under the lee of the *Niagara*, moving with her. Abreast of the *Ariel* Chid slid silently into the lake. He swam swiftly to the schooner, curiously grateful for the cool clean water on his dirty, bloody body. As he climbed hand over hand to the deck, he heard a distant terrific rending crash, then cheers from the deck of the *Ariel*.

"Tom done it! Ya-aa-h! Tom Shad, what a shot!"

Chid saw then, peeping over the rail, that the *Queen Charlotte*, moving under the new breeze, had locked bowsprits with the *Detroit*. The two great vessels lay entwined and unmanageable—and as he watched, the *Niagara* moved slowly upon them under cover of a murderous raking fire from both her batteries.

"Shad slang a barrel full o' chain at the *Queen's* heads'ls whilst she was passin' o' the *Detroit*," Nez told him. "She got out o' hand like you see. I reckon we'll close now too."

The call was passed along the deck. On their bellies, the sail trimmers sheeted home the main and stays'l. Beside the *Ariel*, whispering at their bows of victory to be snatched from defeat, the Lake Erie fleet moved in for the kill.

The concussion of the mighty salvos staggered Chid. Broadside after broadside thundered from the embattled ships. He could not understand how hulls could take such grueling punishment and remain afloat. The little *Ariel* shrieked as the searing metal poured into her body. But still she lived, lived to return the hurts, savagely, vengefully, almost joyously.

Lieutenant Macklin suddenly clutched at his throat and fell beside the pivot gun. Chid crawled to his place. He knew the gun, had built the platform. He was proud of its steadiness under fire, the ease with which he could swing it and aim it by the stout bar inserted into the wooden staple that Paph North had growled so about.

He wanted desperately to aim at one of the tops, to destroy a nest of those murdering red-coated marines. Somehow, he hated the marines most of all. He wondered if George Lefferts was on one of the vessels.

"Lower, boy," Tom Shad sang lightly. "We'll squeeze some hot shot clean through that *Queen's* planking, roll 'em plumb inter her magazine, by Jehovah!"

"Lower she is, Tom!" Chid knew the weakest spots in the frame. The pivot gun was aimed at one now.

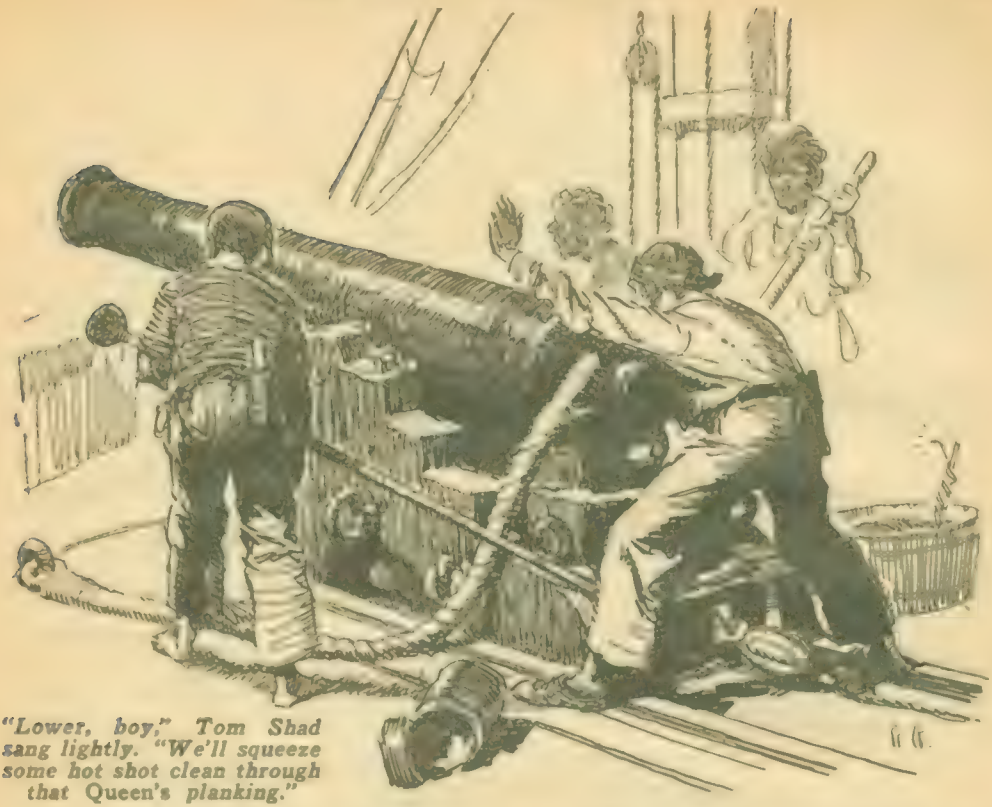
The explosion drowned all other sound, deafened the ears for minutes after. But Chid always reckoned that shot of his and Tom's was the last cast of the dice. He watched with curious impersonality the deluge of shattered ship and torn human bodies that rained upon the *Queen Charlotte*. He watched in wonderment a great thirty-two-pounder pitch its ton of iron forty feet into the air, fall twisting slowly, like an autumn leaf, carrying heavy spars and stout rope in its path. The hot blast swept past him, leaving his flesh seared; it touched sudden crackling fire to the tumbled, wrecked deck of the fouled *Detroit*.

A bugle sounded dully from the British flagship; an officer with a bloody canvas bandage over one eye waved a small white silk handkerchief from the quarterdeck of the *Queen Charlotte*.

"Cease fire!"

The trumpet call echoed down the battle line. "Cease fire!" "Cease fire!"

The stillness was strange, heavy. It



"Lower, boy," Tom Shad sang lightly. "We'll squeeze some hot shot clean through that Queen's planking."

was curiously moving, almost tear-provoking, to see that small immaculate figure alone on the quarterdeck of the *Lawrence*, hands clasped, head raised to the heavens, the full lips murmuring words not meant for man.

"Cease fire!" Packett's voice broke.

"Aye, aye, sir," Shad cried. To Chid he whispered slyly, "But I'll keep my match a'glowin', mate."

Through the clearing smoke Chid watched the torn, be-ribboned red ensigns fall slowly, caress the bowed British heads. He glanced expectantly along the ragged battle line standing stark and wounded against the distant shore of Canada. But no cheer came from the victorious ships.

Victory had been too terrible, too gory, for jubilation.

CHID was stopping shot holes with oakum and pine battens in the after hold when he felt the *Ariel* heel to the wind. He heard the magazine lock being opened again, then the ominous rumble of the pivot gun as it revolved on its cannon balls on the deck above.

He met Nez at the ladder of the main hatch. There was laughter in Nez' eyes, anticipation. He was finished with one chore, keen to be off on the next. "It's just a go-by fer me, Chid"—yes, that was Nez Nott. "You'll always wander, Nez," he had told him once.

"We ain't done yet," Nez chuckled, "a couple o' British longboats loaded up with picked bigwigs and lit out for the Canady shore. They got nigh two miles away a'fore some'un discovered o' them. We got orders from the flagship to go fetch 'em back."

"What's so funny about it?" Chid asked brusquely.

"Why, I jest like the cuteness o' it, Chid. You can't blame a man for trying to get away from where he don't want to be, can you? Tom Shad sez with that pivot gun he can pick 'em off easy's peggin' rocks on turtles. The longboats is tryin' to make a schooner that was

headin' east from Malden," he explained.

Shad was making elaborate preparations, choosing his round shot with professional care, hefting them for weight and roundness. Chid finished caulking the last shot hole. He could hear the swish of the water just outside the planking, then the squeal of blocks as topsails were set. He climbed to the deck, blinking in the bright afternoon sunshine.

Tom Shad was restowing his shot in disgust. "They got to the schooner, damn 'em," he growled, "an' the captain he give orders I ain't to fire on her. Now ain't that a howdydo, mate?"

Chid focused his eyes on the fleeing schooner, shading his eyes against the brilliant path of the lowering sun.

"Why, she's a Bermuda rigger, Nez!"

"She is, Chid. And damn hard to catch."

"The only one on the lake, Nez."

"I reckon."

"Nez," Chid said quietly, "I reckon we look hard enough, we could see some friends of ours—Antoine and Moses Leet, your boys from Utica—"

"By God, Chid, an' Mary Leet!"

"A-yep," Chid gulped, "and Mary Leet."

CHAPTER XXXII

FINAL VICTORY

CHID was grateful that Lieutenant Packett knew about the *Lion*. It would have taken vital time to convince some other commander that the little peak-headed schooner that winged so swiftly toward the guns of Fortress Malden carried fellow Americans, that she must not be fired upon. But Packett understood and time was spared for Chid, precious time that he needed—for it was a sailing race, a battle of straining canvas and taut rigging, and the *Ariel* had suffered horribly.

Unbidden, Chid took charge of the repair work that must be done to make the *Ariel* again sail fast. He alone knew how to fish ruptured spars so that they could bear the press of full canvas once more; only a shipbuilder would know how to anchor severed backstays, where in that torn frame to find solid wood so that lead blocks and carvels and cleats and fairleads could become useful again. Chid alone had the weapon that could triumph in this final battle that must be bloodless; he alone knew how to use it.

He had in Nez his only ally. Together they chopped open the deck—no longer the holystoned white of smooth pine, but now stained in darkening red patches, smeared with disgusting, caking clots. They exposed rough-hewn sturdy deck beams, making ragged holes fore and aft of them. "Pass your backstay tails under the beam," Chid cried, hurrying the sail trimmers, "Pad with double canvas—it'll hold your topmasts in!" He did not wait there. There were other holes to be cut forward, aweather—and alee for that time when the *Ariel* would have to tack. As he chopped at new holes furiously, he heard the sudden hum of the tautened stay as the bowed topmast and the awful urge of the great billowing sails strained against it.

He shaped long pine fishing planks for the fractured fore-gaff, hollowing the insides to a rough fit with a routing-adze. They did not grip the spar faithfully, wood to wood; it was not the proud work of a journeyman shipwright, a foreman—but it had to suffice. He left the two Delaware Indians serving the wound with tarred spunyarn. He was driving a shattered sheave out of a jammed jib sheet block when he heard the foresail creep up the mast on its repaired gaff; felt the eager quickened gait of the *Ariel* as she accepted the drive of still another sail.

He was not worried about the *Ariel*. He knew that she could outsail anything on the lake, even a Bermuda schooner. All she needed was honest full sail, courage at the helm and the understanding nursing of one who loved her.

He did not know how John Packett planned to take the schooner. That was Packett's job, the Navy's job. All that he could do was to make the *Ariel* whole and swift again so that she could catch this reeling ship that held the only thing that he valued in the world.

For him those few escaping men were not important. He could understand that they might be to Packett, to Captain Perry. For him the victory was Mary, to save her again from her captors, from oblivion in the ranks of an enemy that now faced defeat and starvation, that must retreat into the wilderness of Canada, an army to whom hostages might be valuable.

"BY GEE," Nez cried at his side, "I traveled fast before, Chid, but never like this. What do you reckon we're doin'?"

"It doesn't matter. How fast's that Britisher goin'? That's what counts."

"Consid'rable," Nez answered. "She's scuddin' into shore. We'll have to head her off inside three miles or go in an' take her from under the fort."

"Tell John Packett to hang a driver on the main, Nez. Tell him to set a bonnet—and water sails if he has 'em."

"Them's mighty windbags, Chid. She won't stand 'em."

"Go ahead, Nez. I know what I'm doing, I know what I'm fighting for."

He cut two more backstays into the deck, making ready for the great sails that were being sent up from the sail bins. They fluttered aloft, flapping crazily, then suddenly stiffened as the sheets drew them hard and stiff before the brisk quartering wind.

He could pause now to look at the *Lion*. She sailed not so far ahead, stretching down the lake shore, white plumes of hard-spanked spume dashing from under her bows. He could see figures on her deck—red-coated marines, blue-shirted seamen; the sail trimmers laying onto a boom tackle, coaxing another inch an hour from the plunging vessel.

The *Ariel's* men were suddenly about him, purposeful—looking grim as muskets and pikes were handed to them by the armorer. Yes—that's about all that John Packett could do, Chid thought—board and trust that the Americans on her would either keep out of the way or help.

"Riley Grannan's Last Adventure"

This is the classic of funeral sermons—the sermon delivered in a burlesque theater in Rawhide, Nevada, by Herman W. Knickerbocker, the busted preacher-prospector, over the body of Riley Grannan, the dead-broke gambler.

ADVENTURE has ordered a large reprint of this famous booklet. The price is ten cents.

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Please send me.....copies of "Riley Grannan's Last Adventure." I am enclosing.....cents. (10c in stamps or coin for each copy desired.)

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He could see the deep indentation in the coast behind which the guns of Malden must already be shotted, the garrison alert and waiting to protect its own. But he could see too that the *Ariel* was matching the racing *Lion* stride for stride, gaining, creeping slowly into her creamy wake.

Steadily the *Ariel* stole upon her enemy. She creaked and groaned in her straining hull, complained bitterly at the hurt of the cruel straps which bound her to the wind. But she winged swiftly on, with deadly purpose.

"I reckon," Tom Shad observed, "them Britishers what skedaddled was mostly marines. Ain't it like the sons o' bitches?"

There was definite overlap of the two vessels now, the *Ariel* was in the essential windward position. Less than a mile ahead reared the mainland of Canada, a headland behind which was the protecting river and the formidable might of Malden.

He wondered when Packett would give the order to close, to lay the *Lion* by the board and swarm over those clean decks, splatter them with blood and gore. *By God,* Chid thought, *I've seen enough carnage to-day!*

You'd think that the *Lion* would quit, save more death and maiming. She was without armament, a helpless ship, her one weapon of speed now torn from her. Still, there was one chance. Only one short reeling mile ahead there was victory for her. He didn't blame her for trying, for risking the fire of that thirty-two which she must plainly see, for chancing the murderous thrusts of those keen, glistening battle-axes and pikes.

John Packett paced his narrow quarterdeck in a black quandary. What to do? If he could only be sure about those American prisoners. Were they below, reasonably well protected from his attack? If so, were they confined, chained—unable to escape if he had to sink her? Would he kill them, merely exchange British lives for American? And there was that pretty girl, too.

But he made the only decision that his service permitted. "At least," he mused bitterly, "I'm not going to fire that murderous pivot gun into them."

"Quartermaster, you may veer to board!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

Gently the *Ariel* turned toward the *Lion*, toward those white faces that lined the rail, those red and blue clothed figures that suddenly reached for muskets and small arms, for weapons spurned by gallant ships, weapons valued only by man.

If Packett only knew. If he could only be sure about those countrymen of his. One shot from the pivot gun would settle it, he was sure. No hand weapon would dare to challenge its red tongue. It was criminal—almost—to order his boarders away, send them to suffering and maiming and death once again to-day.

Still, that headland was less than five minutes of sailing away. Those British officers—marines, he guessed—free in Canada could lead again, become again dangerous to other of his countrymen.

The trouble, he knew, was that the enemy knew of his quandary, depended upon it to gain that small bit of time they needed.

Wearily Packett turned forward and raised his trumpet. There was no choice but to board, cut into flesh and bone to victory.

SOMETHING whizzed suddenly past his head, singing angrily. Quickly he turned. Over his head, embedded deeply in the great main boom was a double-bitted ax, still quivering—and from the helve there fluttered a small white paper, tied tightly to it with codline.

Packett unfolded the note in wonderment. He was suddenly aware of Chid Alwyn at his side, the boy unmindful of the sanctity of his quarterdeck.

"Only one man in the world could throw a double-bitted ax like that, sir," Alwyn rasped at him. "A Canuck—Antoine Marestier, sir."

"One of the Americans?"

"One of the finest, sir. Read—read the note."

Packett read the two lines, then passed the note to Alwyn. After all, he too

had a stake in this engagement. It said:

> We are all aft of the mainmast, in the hold.
> Do not hold your fire because of us.
> Mary Leet.

Packett sighed gratefully.

"Shad," he trumpeted, "rake her decks with canister—for'ard of the mainm'st, mind! And Alwyn—if you'll be good enough to get off my quarterdeck . . .!"

It was almost funny to see the yellow-haired boy redden and stumble forward. He was a good lad. Packett had been in the service since the Tripoli affair but he'd learned something from that boy today; new tricks, a sudden realization that the weapons of war were not only powder and ball and steel blade.

Something whizzed suddenly past his head, singing angrily. Quickly he turned. Embedded deeply in the boom was a double-bitted ax.

The pivot gun had to fire only once. It did not surprise Packett; no enemy of military perception would require its truth to be spoken a second time. The red ensign crept slowly down from the main truck. But Packett had called "Cease fire" for the second time that day as the signalman stepped to the halyards. There was a thin line, imperceptible at times, beyond which war became murder.

With a smile he nodded to the impatient yellow-haired shipwright.

"Yes," he said, "you may go with the boarding boat—aft of the mainmast, in the hold, my lad!"

"Thank you, sir."

How quickly, thought Packett, they remember what they are really fighting for. Or more likely they had never forgotten.

The minute guns had ceased their solemn requiem over the twilight shadows of Put-in Bay. All the long bright afternoon the flag-draped barges had plied between the two great fleets, intermingled in peaceful anchorage, and the wooded island. Sixty-eight bodies, true brothers before God at last, rested side by side in the common grave—each beneath the flag of the eagle or the flag of the lion, according to his choice in life. The grave was a lonely sandy mound drawing the purple shadows from the vivid Erie sunset. The stirring lake breeze held the tang of Autumn, whispered faintly in the dense evergreens.

Peace.

Yes, thought Chid, peace; peace on Erie at last. He would never forget those measured solemn minute guns—nor the quiet sober words that Oliver Hazard Perry had spoken over that raw red mound. "There is no victor, there is no vanquished. In that future before us we shall look back on this day as a uniting, a fusing—not as a day when two great nations were tried, but as a day when a great race was preserved. . ."

Peace; peace on Erie.

They walked slowly to the mole where the *Ohio* lay moored. His arm was strong about Mary. She felt so small, so soft, so yielding. They did not talk. He could understand her tears, the quiet emotion that had made her sob as the funeral boats had landed their heroes at the burying place on the beautiful, now hallowed, island.

They paused at the mole lingering in the warm evening. Dan Dobbins spoke from his quarterdeck, his gruffness softened. "We sail in five minutes, Chid."

"I'll be ready," Chid said.

There was not much more to say. He had told Mary all as the *Ariel* had sailed from Malden shore. She knew now that he loved her as life itself. Their kisses had been sweet, promising; their plans were made.

"Take care of Mrs. Slinker till I come back," said Chid.

"Of course, Chid. We shall be together, busy in the hospital, for a long time. Watch over father, Chid. He's well again but he's not young any more—only in his heart."

"I reckon," said Chid, "that's the place to be young in."

He drew her into the shadow of a great spruce. His lips searched eagerly for hers.

"Forever, Mary, my Mary. . ."

"My darling. Forever, Chid. . ."

THE *Ohio*, her supplies unloaded onto the fleet, ghosted into the lake. She caught the new breeze off Gibralta Point and reached swiftly east to Black Rock. Chid stood at the rail, his gaze fixed on the fast disappearing shore of Put-in Bay. He could no longer see the dear figure, the waving arm—but he could see for a long time the tall spruce under which they had stood saying those last lingering words.

Nez Nott slipped silently to his side, spitting reflectively into the lake. With him was Antoine.

"Chid," Nez said, "did you know that George Lefferts is in the brig for'ard?"

"No."

"Well, he is, in irons. The Master-at-Arms turned him over to Pegleg Ruskin, the U. S. marshal; him an' his money. He had nigh onto thirty thousan' dollars in good paper when they took him off'n the *Lion*."

"Ah t'ink," observed Antoine, "dat skonk she get what she t'ink she give de odder mans, *hein?* Ah t'ink is good, me."

"Antwine," Nez grinned, "you speak when yer spoke to before yer betters. Don't forget I licked you good an' proper at splittin' the chip this mornin'."

"Is tease Ah t'ink," Antoine laughed. "You hit de main boom wit' de hax, *hein?* Ah t'ink no, Nez, hol' fran', me!"

"That warn't nuthin', Antwine. But, say where'd you cast that ax from anyways?"

"F'om de winder in de littley *Lion* boat. Ah steal de hax, bah Gar."

"Well," Nez grunted, "'twas a pretty good cast I got to admit. But now, you take a shoulder knife, honed up keen an' cast by a expert. . ."

They went below arm in arm. He would see a lot more of them. They were going to the same place that he was, a step nearer that beckoning Otter where, Nez insisted, the hills had no valleys, the rum casks no bottoms and the women no virtue.

They were good friends, tried and true. He respected them and they respected him. He reckoned that that was a mighty essential ingredient of friendship, even of a man's friendship for himself.

Pegleg Ruskin met him as he turned from the lighted ward room to the berthing alley.

"Mr. Alwyn."

"Hello, Mr. Ruskin. I'm sorry I couldn't see you before."

"Well, I ain't, sir. You was on damn important business, for me an' sevril million other folks. Well, I got the paper, all ready to sign. Ahem! Now—whereas this is a true and faithful account of what transpired on a voyage of privateering—"

"Where do you want me to sign?"

"Why, here if you please, Mr. Alwyn." The marshal's finger found the white space at the end of the cramped writing.

Chid signed. It was a good trouble to be shut of at last. It was a freedom of another kind that Ruskin was giving him; a kind that you did not have to earn, a kind that was every man's right if he was an honest, worthy citizen.

"Thank you, Mr. Alwyn. Now about the prize money. I don't rightly know how much it will figure out to, but the Court will decide an' distribute it in due course."

"Do we get that?"

"Certainly. It's yours, ain't it? But don't be impatient—likely 'twill take consid'rable time before you see it."

They shook hands. Chid went forward and began to undress, taking care not to disturb the bandage that Dr. Parsons had bound around that healing splinter wound.

Pegleg Ruskin appeared suddenly.

"Mr. Alwyn, your address. I nigh forgot it. We'll want to know where to forward that money."

"Well, Mr. Ruskin," Chid said, "well—I guess Erie, Pennsylvania, care of the Brown and Alwyn Shipyard. But I reckon not for a while yet. There's still a war to be won before a man can commence chasing his own plans. You better address me at the United States Navy yard, Lake Champlain, care of Noah Brown."

"Thank you, Mr. Alwyn. I'm right proud to have made your acquaintance."

"Good night, Mr. Ruskin."

He was utterly tired. But tonight he did not sleep in blackness—his sleep was gentle, paced by pleasant dreams, provoking, challenging and promising.

The End

BREAK-

THROUGH ★

BY

ROBERT E. MAHAFFAY

THE private took his hands off the wheel, flexed his arms and chuckled. "Kind of gets you—driving straight for a spell like this. I'd of swore there wasn't a road like it in North Africa."

Slouched in his corner of the ammunition truck's cab, the sergeant chewed at his toothpick, but didn't say anything.

"When a line busts, it sure busts, don't it?" the private said. "Smashes all to hell, and your stuff goes running through the hole like a batch of scared jackrabbits."

"We busted through, all right," the sergeant agreed. "It was plain hell, but we did it."

"Look at 'em." The private nodded his head. "You'll never see anything prettier."

Up ahead, as far as they could see, the road was solid with vehicles—trucks, half-tracks, jeeps, tanks—moving in a steady procession. The road had just enough incline to make the pull an unfaltering one. It ran straight as a yardstick into the misty distance, and mist crept close at either hand.

The private leaned across the wheel to peer through the windshield and up. He was young, and his cheeks had a clean, fresh look, as if they were still damp from scrubbing.

"None of their stuff up today," he said, "which is all right with me. Notice how funny this mist lies? You can see the sky, but nothing else. Boy, just plain blue sky can look mighty bad when those damn Stukas come piling down out of it."

"It is mighty bad," admitted the sergeant. His jaws, which were like clean-shaven leather, worked methodically at the toothpick.

For a moment the eagerness in the private's eyes was clouded. "Three days of it," he said softly. "Three days and nights. Hammering those sons with everything we had. Tooling this rig smack into Hades and out again. I figured my eardrums was busted for good. I figured I'd swallowed so much sand and grit I never would get it all out of my belly. No harm in saying those other guys can really fight, is there, Sarge?"

The sergeant shrugged. "They been at it a long time. The ones that are left know how."

"There was times when I couldn't

ILLUSTRATED BY L. STERNE STEVENS

shake the sound of those Stukas out of my head."

"You weren't any different than anybody else."

"I had to bite down to keep from looking. I had to tell myself I was just thinking it."

"We weren't just thinking it when we hit that ridge."

THE private wiped a wrist across his eyes, as a man may when he remembers having been blinded by sweat and grime, and he wet his lips as if he expected to find them gritty with dust.

"All green, that ridge was. Pretty and green and waiting for you to come up and lie on the grass. Only they'd sneaked a battery of 88's up there to flank us. They began chewing that road up, and trying to chew us up along with it. 'Step on it, you chuckle-headed farmer,' you said.

"You looked funny, Sarge. Your blouse was tore half to pieces. Your eyes looked like they'd been stabbed in a dirty blanket with a running iron. 'I ain't a farmer,' I said. 'I'm a cow-puncher.' And this hack was pitching fit to pile us both. Half the road was spit-up dirt; the other half was smoke. There was the shells hollering, and the smash when they hit, and you cussing.

"One of 'em knocked a wheel all skew-jawed, remember? Knocked me over against you, and all you held on with was one hand. 'Hoe down your own row, you blasted seed-pusher,' you said."

"You hit more holes," said the sergeant, "than an old woman punching through yarn with a knitting needle."

"And then the Stukas came," said the private. "I reckon it's the noise, mostly, that scares a man. There was so many of us you knew they couldn't get us all. That one, though—that last one—remember? We was doing maybe fifty, and it came out of nowhere, right on top of us. You said, 'Steady, kid. If it ain't—'"

The private stopped talking, a puzzled look in his eyes. He stared up along the line of vehicles flanked by the mist that obliterated every landmark. The sun shone warmly down into the channel of the climbing road.

"I been counting, Sarge. See that truck up there, fourteen ahead of us? That's Little Davey's rig. The cab got knocked crooked coming off the boat. Only it can't be Little Davey's rig."

"It is," the sergeant said.

"We saw her getting past that ridge," said the private. "Lying in a ditch with her guts burned out. Now she's clean and shiny. They're all clean and shiny, Sarge."

The sergeant said, not looking at the boy, "I ain't blind."

After a long while the private said, "Sarge, I ain't had my hands on this wheel for better'n five minutes. It don't make any difference."

The sergeant remained silent. The boy stared at him, swallowing two or three times before he could speak.

"I reckon, then," he said at last, "there ain't a road like this in North Africa or anywheres else. The reason I couldn't remember that last thing you said was because you never finished saying it."

The leather-jawed seargeant took the toothpick from his mouth, pulled off a sliver that had been bothering him. He grinned at the boy in a friendly way.

"That Stuka planted one right smack on top of us. He gestured with the toothpick at the string of men and equipment up ahead. "Them too, one time or another."

And after a bit he added, "I'd started to say that if it wasn't us busted through, it'd be somebody else just like us."

The boy fought the tightness away from the corners of his mouth.

"Did they?"

"They did," the sergeant said.

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(Continued from page 8)

doesn't terminate until the author, proof-reader and editor gyrate through a three-way checking maze and finally emerge—bloody and unbowed or penitent and chagrined—as the case may be. For example—

Dear Mr. Millholland:

In your story, "Shot for Shot," *Adventure*, August, 1943—Page 38, line 39, right-hand column—you mention *foot locker* and ammo. "lugged clear from the States." Two strikes against you.

It is improbable that a private in the M.C. would be permitted a foot locker—odds are on only a barracks bag (2 at most), and a blanket roll-pack combination. Secondly, it is a G.C.M. offense to have ammo. stowed below decks in one's gear. That is specifically forbidden since it's obviously dangerous. There are three specific prohibitions in gear stowed below decks—ammo., matches, and inflammable fluids! Perhaps an officer with hand baggage *topside* could do so—but even that's doubtful. I know whereof I speak as I've had half a Sea-Bee battalion out in the Pacific, and regulations are very strict. You can verify my statements with any Marine officer who's been across. If I'm in error, my apologies—but I don't believe so!

Having read *Adventure* since 1918, I'm interested in *fact* not fancy. So I hope you'll take my corrections in the tone in which they're given!

Harold H. Schoen
Lt., CEC, USNR
ex-O in C, 10 CB—Section One
(presently on CB Recruting Duty, First Joint Service Induction Area, Boston, Mass., 1904 P. O. Bldg.)

That's the kind of communication that sets in motion the machinery mentioned above. We put Ray Millholland on the spot and he promptly shot back a carbon of his reply to Lt. Schoen.

Dear Mr. Schoen:

Adventure sent on your letter of July 27, in which you took exception to the technical accuracy of a part of my recent story, "Shot for Shot." Well, we old-timers of the Splinter Fleet of '17 and '18 are liable to that just about any time!

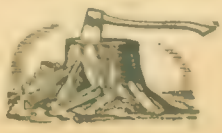
But in this case, I think the box score on errors runs about 50-50 between you and an ex-chief engineer of S.C. 225. You jump me for letting a pfc Marine take a foot locker overseas; which I do not! It was Bradshell, a *commissioned officer*, who rated the foot locker in which the match ammunition was transported. Sure, there are all kinds of strict regulations about what can't be stowed below decks, but I have never heard of an officer's foot locker being inspected by anybody else. Have you?

I have known quite a few "match shooters" in my time from all branches of the service during the several years of National Match competition at Camp Perry, where I used to burn up a lot of Uncle Sam's high priced ammunition. I noticed that the Marines always seemed to have plenty of special hand-loaded stuff to shoot in certain matches they entered. The officer "Bradshell" in my story is something of a composite of several crack shots from the Marines that I have met in competition during the past twenty years, and I'll bet you something pretty that more than one clip of match ammunition went overseas in a Marine officer's foot locker.

Incidentally there is a young gunner's mate aboard USS S.C.—who is serving somewhere around one of the bases you might have helped build in the South Seas. He says those things jump around the same as they did for his old man in the last show. If you ever get back into that part of the war, please gam the S.C.—and say hello to Jim for me.

Sincerely,
Ray Millholland.

We're willing to let the whole thing go on that 50-50 basis if the lieutenant is agreeable. Or has anyone else an oar to dip?—K. S. W.



ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

TEXAS treasure trove.

Query:—It is my understanding that when Texas was admitted to the Union, certain rights in her Constitution which differed from those of the other States were retained.

Can you inform me as to the rights given by Texas to the finder of treasure trove within the State?

I am told that Texas law differs from that of all other States on this subject, but I have so far been unable to get definite information.

—Paul S. Greider,
M. H.—Culver Military Academy,
Culver, Indiana.

Reply by J. W. Whitaker:—The Constitution of the State of Texas is different from that of any of the other states of the Union. Texas was a republic before being admitted into the Union and had her own Constitution, which has been amended to cover certain sections of the U. S. Constitution.

Texas counties have the jurisdiction over the treasures that have been buried within their boundaries. If found a part of the treasure is taken over by the authorities.

OUTRIGGERS and catamarans.

Query:—For several years I have been thinking about building an outrigger canoe for sailing. I had no definite size or design in mind, in fact I hadn't given much thought to the details as I don't know if this sort of craft is at all practical. I may as well admit my only experience with sailing has been in San Diego bay and not a great deal of that.

From all I've heard and read about the Polynesian outrigger canoes, they seem to be very seaworthy, and I would imagine, easy to handle. I wanted something that would go outside the bay safely or through the surf. I like to paddle but don't care for rowing or outboard motors so this seemed just about the sort of craft to have.

I don't recall seeing any plans for anything like this but suppose they could be found somewhere. My idea was to build it large enough for two or possibly three people, keeping it as narrow as possible but still wide enough so it could be used without the outrigger. Perhaps my design would be somewhat similar to the double-outrigger Malay canoes. At any rate, I wanted to ask you what kind of sail would be best and where it should be set. Would an outrigger or two outriggers help keep it from drifting to leeward, or would a centerboard be necessary?

I realize that I would have to use whatever material I could pick up, but what would be best, just supposing that I could get it? Now about outriggers, should they be light in weight or heavy, or does it matter? Are they set any particular distance from the canoe?

—James C. Arnott,
Box 321,
La Mesa, Calif.

Reply by Raymond S. Spears:—The outrigger canoe was contrived by deep-sea Pacific islanders for breasting the heavy swells and winds of their open waters. Also the two-hulled catamaran —boats held apart by a frame to give stability against capsizing. I once traveled several weeks down the Mississippi with a Venezuelan in a catamaran it had a paddlewheel between the two hulls 12 ft. long, about 20 inches wide, each). He rode a very bad gale against the river current one night when he was torn loose by a bank caving. An outrigged balsa, spruce, other light wood log or beam (painted against water-

(Continued on page 161)

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, financial backing or employment.

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Notice: Many of our *Ask Adventure* experts are now engaged in government service of one kind or another. Some are on active duty in the Army or Navy, others serving in an executive or advisory capacity on various of the boards and offices which have been set up to hasten the nation's war effort. Almost without exception these men have consented to remain on our staff, carry on their work for the magazine if humanly possible, but with the understanding that for the duration such work is of secondary importance to their official duties. This is as it should be, so when you don't receive answers to queries as promptly as you have in the past please be patient. And remember that foreign mails are slow and uncertain these days, many curtailed drastically. Bear with us and we'll continue to try to serve you as speedily as possible.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—Earl B. Powell, care of *Adventure*

Baseball—Frederick Lieb, care of *Adventure*

Basketball—Stanley Carhart, 99 Broad St. Matawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. Carhart, c/o *Adventure*.

Boxing—Col. John V. Grombach, 1619 Mass. Ave. N.W., Wash., D. C.

Camping—Paul M. Fink, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—Edgar S. Perkins, 1325 So. Main St., Princeton, Ill.

Coins: *and Medals*—William L. Clark, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St. N. Y. C.

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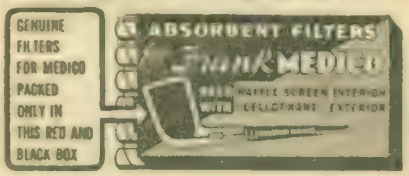
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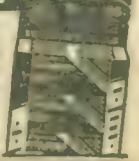

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Old-Time Sailoring—Chas. H. Hall, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—Donegan Wiggins, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns, American and Foreign, Wing Shooting and Field Trials: Boy B. Tinney, c/o *Adventure*.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—Raymond S. Spears, Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—Louis DeB. Handley, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—Capt. R E. Gardner, care of *Adventure*.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—"Chief" Stanwood, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—Jackson Scholz, R. D. No. 1. Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—Paul M. Fink, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—Murl B. Thrush, New York Athletic Club. 59th St. and 7th Ave., New York City.

Yachting—A. R. Knauer, 6720 Jeffery Ave., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology—*American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—Arthur Woodward, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders* — Major Falk Harmel, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; mosquitoes and disease-carrying insects*—Dr. S. W. Frost, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

North American Forestry: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. Carhart, c/o *Adventure*.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—Wm. B. Barbour, 1091 Springdale Rd., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—Clifford H Pope, care of *Adventure*.

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—Chas. H. Hall, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *anywhere in No. America. Outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure.*

The Merchant Marine—GORDON MACALLISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 5 Minerva Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, care of *Adventure.*

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Sunken Treasure: *treasure ships; deep-sea diving; salvage operations and equipment*—LIEUTENANT HARRY E. RIESENBERG, care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 156 Joralemon St., Belleville, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping — RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, King Edw., H. S., Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure.*

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure.*

U. S. Navy—LIEUT. DURAND KIEFER, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands — BUCK CONNER, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure.*

★New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

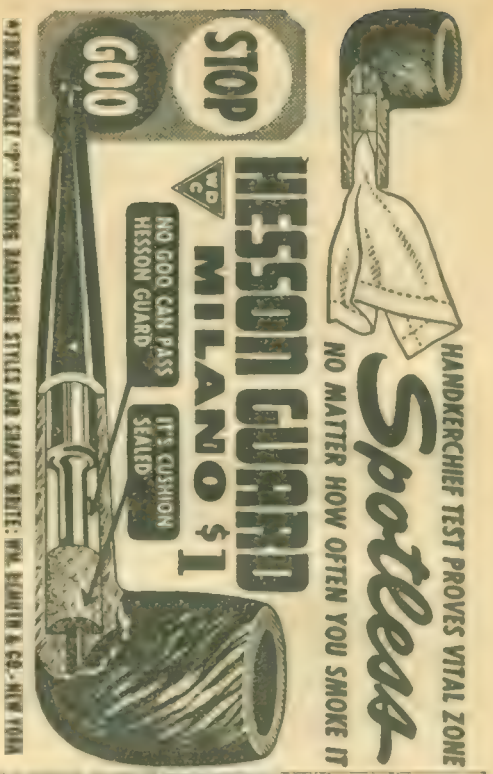
★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Ingle Nook," 89 Cornelia St., Wiley Park, N. S. W., Australia.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Deputy Administrator, Defense Savings Staff, 1055 Bishop St., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, New York City.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.* — CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 2231 W. Harbor Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa.*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia.*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.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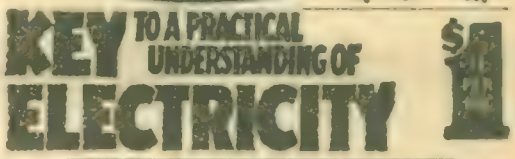

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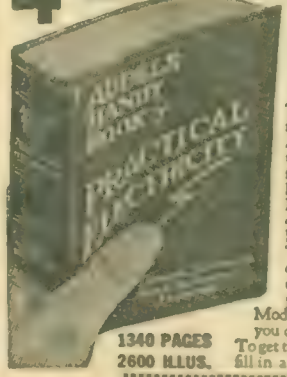

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to Lost Trails will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Louis Sixt, probably known as Bob Six, last heard of in Gananoque, Ont. and Vancouver, B. C. Age about 26, height 4′ 10″, weight 135 lbs., gray eyes, back-brushed straight brown hair. Scrapper, gambler, seafaring man. Anyone having knowledge of his whereabouts please write his brother Paul Sixt, c/o *Adventure*.

Max Kennison Todd, please communicate with your grandson, Donald Todd, Rt. 13, Box 781 A, Houston, Texas.

Jim "High" Thompson, Gen. Del., Woodland, Calif., would like to hear from some of his old friends in New York City, performers, agents and others.

Would appreciate any information regarding James Eischeid, native of Iowa. He is my father and have not heard from him for more than 15 years. He has mechanical engineering training and is also interested in aviation. Also has a decided lust for travel. Any clue to his whereabouts would be of great value to me. Please address any information to Cpl. E. D. Eischeid, USMC, H & S Btry.-9th Def. Bn.-F.M.F., c/o The Fleet Postoffice, San Francisco, Calif.

Leroy "Jack" Miles, age 21, height 5′ 10½″, weight 145 lbs. Eyes brown with inflamed iris; hair-sandy; complexion bronzed and freckled. Last heard of June 5, 1942 at Santa Fe, New Mexico. His home was originally at Hereford, Texas, but cannot be located. Please notify Rexford C. Miles, Box 389, Morenci, Arizona.

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THE TRAIL AHEAD

"I'm Maxim Johnstone," the innkeeper said conversationally. "I succor to the wayfarer. I didn't quite ketch who you said you was."

The young man smiled. "I'm Kingsley Lavender Bodette."

"Lawsy!" The innkeeper was impressed. "Well, son, hit's a honor and a pleasure to have you. You shore pack a passel of double-distilled names."

That's more or less the way we felt about the young man who rides along the Southern backroads of the 1840's through Merle Constiner's stirring three-part story—

"WHERE NESTS THE WATER-SNAKE"

—which begins next month. We were impressed, too, after we'd read the first page of the yarn—and felt it was an honor and a pleasure—even as did the hostlike Maxim, to have him with us. From the twelve-inch Chickasaw hunting knife he carried by a thong around his neck to the Latin conjugations that he mumbled as he rode, we liked everything about the young man. And we're wagering you'll approve as well. There's a fine Farnol flavor to this picaresque piece of Americana that's going to get under way in our December issue. From the time King Bodette's horse stumbles over the corpses in that Tennessee clearing till the *Morning Star* of Memphis, with her deckload of cornhusks—why should anyone be shipping cornhusks?—burns in that desolate bayou, you'll forget the headlines in your daily paper and ride into another century, stirrup to stirrup with as intriguing a bunch of rogues as have been put on paper since "The Broad Highway."

Plus another gripping novelette of Davie Coster, last seen in "Commando's Creed," by James Norman. "Only the Valiant" is the title of this latest adventure of the Republican guerrilla forces who still fight on in the Spanish Sierra Nevada. . . . And a glorious tale of whaling in the Nazi sub-infested waters off the Chilean coast by Brian O'Brien. "Killer Ship," it's called, and blood as well as oil is the deepsea harvest of the voyage.

In addition there will be short stories by Bill Gulick, John Alden Knight, Stanley C. Vickers and others; the final chapters of Georges Surdez' "Sharper Than the Sword" and the usual fact features and departments you won't find anywhere but in the big new 164-page—

On Sale November 10th

(Continued from page 154)

logging) balancing a skiff or canoe is feasible, but the need of anchorage or shore mooring is apparent. Also, the construction is awkward to handle—and landing it on an open beach means a lot of wrack-and-strain and the difficulty of dead-weight to drag up.

The outrigger does away with centerboard need. Bottom of boat would need plate keep for protection.

You would find the experiment interesting to make, though I feel pretty sure that for utility you would find a seagoing canoe, with inside floats in bow and stern; or a dory model skiff, or catboat with sail, more useful and having a wider range, with equal safety.

Before building, look into marine plywood construction. The Douglas Fir Plywood Association, Tacoma, Washington, will send you literature and pictures covering plywood boats. THE RUDDER, 9 Murray Street, New York, N. Y., prints a book, Plywood Boat Plans (50c), telling about ten plywood boats.

The fir plywood association, above, sends out a number of small boat plans, and looking these over will give you suggestions about your own project.

I think instead of having a log or solid wood outrigger, it would be better to have a hollow tube of plywood, well sealed against leaking (with a drain in case of a leak), marine-paint cover and inside, using marine plywood. Such an outrigger would weigh little and could be rigged on an adjustable frame, or frames (one on each side) to go with an Indian canoe of any length. (You know the Northwest coast Indians had enormous war and sea-going canoes before the white-men came.)

The subject is varied and fascinating —catamaran and outrigger craft are worthy of a lot of study and research—and construction can be figured from Small Boat Building, published by Macmillan Co., 60 5th Ave., New York, N. Y., and it is well worth looking into.

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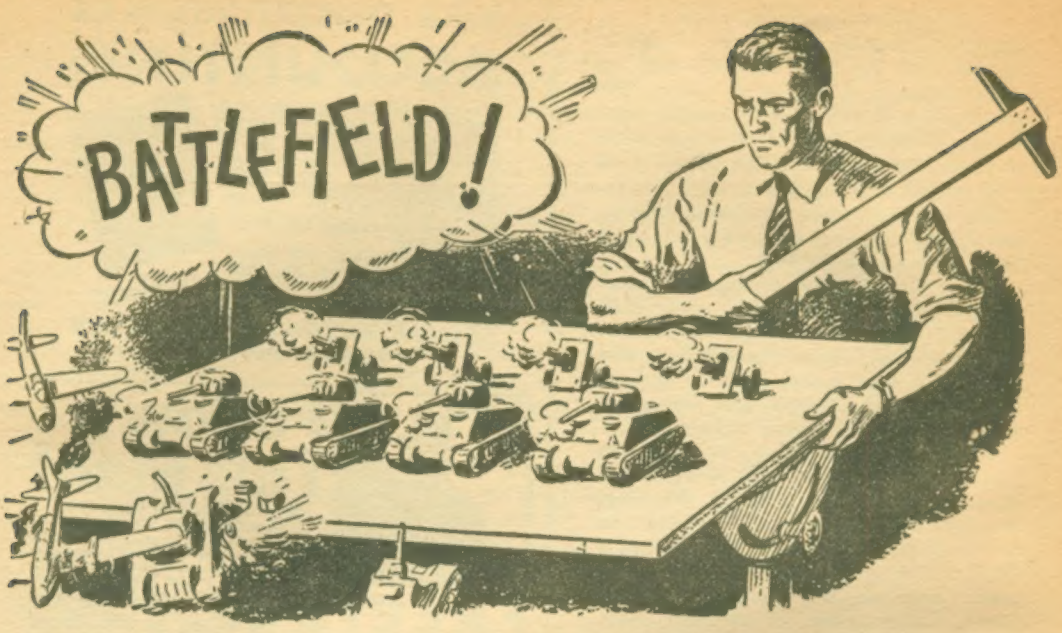

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"Don't be asleep to danger!"—says HI to HATT

Them plans you're spillin' in your sleep might reach the Risin' Sun!
Well, shut my mouth! We shouldn't peep until our job is done!
HATT

WAR AIN'T A DREAM!

This ain't no time for forty winks
an' talkin' in your slumber,
'Cause one of Hitler's prowlin' ginks
could easy get your number!
A patriot what's worth the name
will safeguard this here nation
By puttin' in a lot of work
an' cuttin' conversation!

(Signed) **MR. HI AND MR. HATT**

SMOOTH AS SILK but not "High Hat"

KESSLER'S BLENDED WHISKEY

KESSLER'S PRIVATE BLEND. 55% Grain Neutral Spirits 85 Proof Julius Kessler Distilling Co., Incorporated, Lawrenceburg, Ind

Another scan
by
cape1736